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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Why are there so few women on 'Crossfire'?

{ NAoMi WoLF }

A guide to the Kennedys

{ JoE KLEiN }

Should the courts give us Gay Civil Rights?

{ JEffREY RoSEN }

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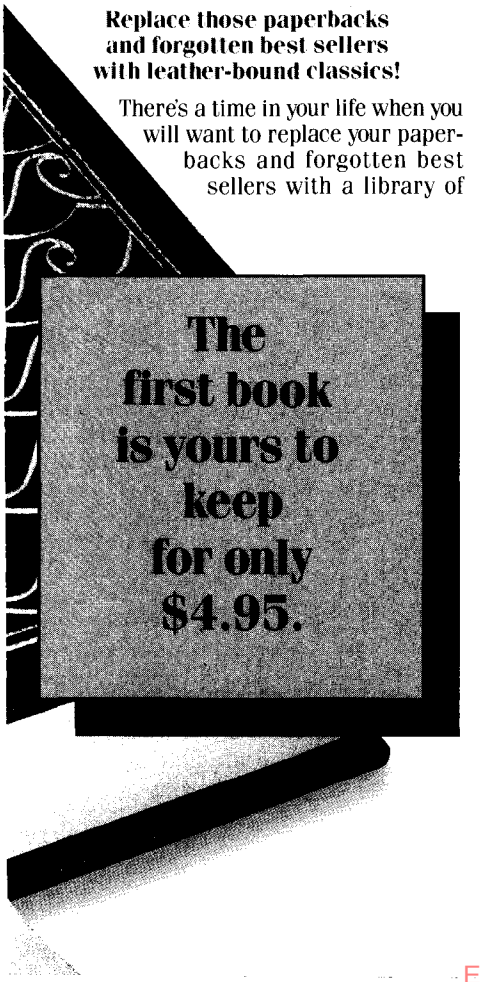

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FROM WASHINGTON

Spin sickness

On November 2 the Israeli Labor Party lost mayors' races in both Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to the opposition Likud. Labor's leader, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, said: "I think what has happened ... has a negative aspect for us. I neither deny it nor hide it. It's a reality, and it's a very unpleasant one."

The next day, the Democratic party lost governorship races in Virginia and New Jersey and the mayor's race in New York City. President Clinton said: "I don't think you can draw too many conclusions from this.... What you can say is, the American people want change.... But that's not a message that strikes at either Democrats or Republicans."

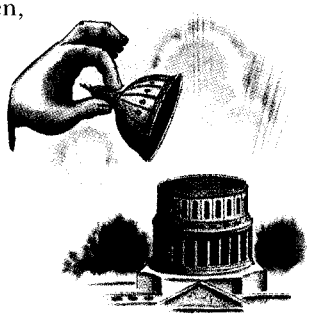
Why does he do it? What does he gain from denying the obvious: that November 3 was a bad day for the Democrats? It's the great American spin, of course, practiced by politicians of every stripe. But Clinton seems to have the spin disease worse than most. And he surrounds himself with people to whom spin comes so naturally that you suspect they learned how to spin before they learned how to talk (and will, no doubt, be spinning in their graves).

Spinning is related to lying, but slightly different: spin is a lie no one really believes, or is even supposed to believe. It's more a ritual incantation—a superstitious warding off of demons—than an actual expression of fact.

Especially ludicrous spin such as Clinton's after election day is not merely disingenuous. It is undignified. Far from communicating strength and confidence, it communicates weakness and desperation. The image is of a cartoon character who thinks that as long as he keeps churning his legs and doesn't look down, it won't matter that he's run off the edge of a cliff. And it's connected to Clinton's larger difficulties.

Clinton's biggest image problem, I think, is that he lacks weight or *gravitas* (what the British call "bottom.") Even those who like him or agree with him on issues don't hold him in much awe. And something about him brings out the bully in critics and the press, far beyond any rational assessment of his success or failure. Clinton's relative youth is one unavoidable factor. And awe ultimately, I suppose, has to be earned with substantive accomplishments. But spin sickness doesn't help. Nor does the general sense he and his administration convey of frenzied eagerness to succeed. President Clinton needs to be reminded: he's already succeeded.

Bill Clinton is a lucky man. The worst thing that can happen to him for the rest of his life, career-wise, is that he won't win re-election in 1996. And how bad would that be? It would hurt for a while. But then, for the rest of his days, he would still be a former president of the United States (a fate that awaits him by the year 2000 in any event). He'd still be lionized and cosseted. His opinions would still be sought, and he could take cheap potshots at his successor like George Bush. He could get rich, do good, sleep late, play golf or a little of each. Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford have both, in different ways, had a wonderful time as former presidents.



("Say, is my kingdom lost? Why, 'twas my care, / And what loss is it to be rid of care?"—*Richard II*)

Clinton is obviously a competitive fellow, passionately motivated by a desire to succeed. But in the yuppie rat race Bill Clinton has already won and, in a way, retired the crown. He was the first to make it all the way to the top. Nothing can ever take that away. The best thing Clinton could do for his presidency, as it enters yet another rough patch, is to communicate—possibly even to say outright—that it doesn't matter all that much to him whether he is re-elected three years from now. Or at least that he has more important things on his mind.

At the shallowest level of political strategy, expressing indifference to re-election would appeal to the current anti-politician spirit in the land: the widespread and somewhat fatuous notion that anybody who actually wants political office is thereby morally disqualified from holding it. It would place Clinton "above politics" (and thereby, of course, improve his political chances).

Convincing the world that he doesn't live or die for re-election would also increase Clinton's bargaining leverage with Congress, Republicans, foreign leaders and other negotiating partners. Clinton has very little leverage these days because he isn't feared. Ronald Reagan, at his peak, was feared for his political strength. Clinton, at the moment, doesn't have that advantage. But a man with no fears of his own becomes invulnerable in a different way and can be feared for that reason. In the game of chicken, the winner is the one who fears death least. Right now, Clinton's exquisite political sensitivity and defensiveness make him seem vulnerable indeed. It's one reason people find it so easy to pick on him.

A president liberated from re-election fears does not become a powerless lame duck. He becomes someone able to use the bully pulpit more boldly, to make enemies and hold them up to scorn, to cut deals or refuse to cut deals in ways that would otherwise seem politically too risky. The idea isn't to promise not to run again; it's to let people know (or at least to make them believe) that you're not living in fear of defeat.

Above all, a publicly communicated unconcern for re-election—a sense from the president that his personal ambitions, at least, have been fulfilled—would help address the *gravitas* problem. Clinton still often comes off as a grade-grubber, an apple-polisher, someone who is about to hit us up for a Rhodes scholarship recommendation. It's not appealing. And it helps to explain, I think, why Clinton gets not just so little respect but so little human sympathy.

He deserves more. Bill Clinton, with a minority electoral mandate, is slogging through one problem after another either not faced or willfully ignored (or, indeed, made worse) by his predecessors. You can disagree with his solution in any particular case and still sympathize. Yet few do. And it's partly Clinton's own fault.

Wouldn't it be nice if he had said, after November 3, "It was a bad day for my party, and I'm very disappointed"? Or even, "I think the voters have made a mistake"? Or if he were to say, "No, I'm not at all sure my position will prevail on NAFTA, I'm not at all sure it won't hurt me politically and I don't especially care because I think I'm right"? Truth: the ultimate spin. Well, it's worth a try.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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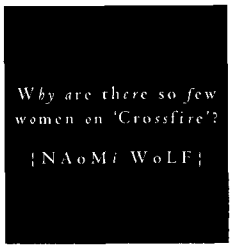

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CORRESPONDENCE

Obsessed

To the editors:

Robert Wright's aptly titled column, "Obsession" (November 1), mischaracterizes the work of Jeff Faux and myself, as well as making several serious attacks on our academic integrity. The bulk of Wright's attacks are based on quotes from political scientist Raul Hinojosa, who has often contradicted himself on the subject of NAFTA. Wright quotes Hinojosa as calling the assumptions on capital mobility we employed "totally ridiculous." Yet when Wright wrote those words, he also had in his possession a letter sent by Hinojosa and his co-modeler Robert McCleery to then U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills a year and a half after the publication of the Faux-Spriggs paper. The letter states:

> We want to make it clear that there was nothing illegitimate in the EPI simulations of the Hinojosa-McCleery model. The EPI results are one possible outcome of that model, under the assumptions which they asked Bob McCleery to run for them. While we have chosen to model the issue of capital mobility differently in our other publications, EPI's specification of complete investment displacement does represent a counterweight to those who have merely assumed absolutely no displacement.

Since this letter did nothing to further Wright's crusade, he ignored it and the questions it raises about Hinojosa's reliability. Similarly, Wright ignored evidence we pointed to from Ed Leamer's paper (titled "The Wage Effects of a U.S.-Mexican Free Trade Agreement") that, at least at the time Leamer authored it, was intended to represent a rough estimate of the wage effect of NAFTA.

Furthermore, we never asked Hinojosa to run the model for us, and thus he never "politely declined," as Wright writes. He *was* out of the country when we decided to go ahead with the project, so we contacted McCleery instead. The briefing paper was faxed to both McCleery and Hinojosa before its release, and we held lengthy discussions with McCleery after he had seen the final product. We never heard from Hinojosa. We did not and would not have published anything we thought the authors would find misleading. We are sorry Hinojosa sees the situation differently.

Wright is wrong that we misrepresented the results of the model in the briefing paper we published on the subject. We wrote that the 550,000 high-wage workers who don't get jobs under NAFTA are re-employed with a 50 percent wage cut. We stand by that figure. Wright cites Hinojosa (again) as saying that the "50 percent figure is way, way high." Hinojosa may be unfamiliar with his own model, but that is an accurate description of the relative wages of the two types of labor it contains: minimum-wage, non-traded services and manufacturing jobs.

WILLIAM SPRIGGS
Economist, Economic Policy Institute
Washington, D.C.

Robert Wright replies:

I did have Raul Hinojosa's letter to Carla Hills when I wrote my story. I also had Hinojosa's explanation for it: more than a year after he complained to the EPI about its misleading depiction of some results from the Hinojosa-McCleery model, and well after he got assurances that the error wouldn't be repeated, EPI asked for his help in a dispute with Hills involving the Bush administration's own questionable use of the model. Hinojosa says that, since he felt that EPI had mended its ways, and since he rather liked being a thorn in the side of the Bush administration two weeks before the 1992 election, he obliged; he signed the letter to Hills (which he says was drafted by EPI and revised by him), complete with its glossing over of Hinojosa's doubts about the model's assumptions. (In his letter to Spriggs and Faux the previous year, he had called the assumptions "exaggerated" and "extreme.") Subsequently, though, he found that EPI was still distorting the model's results, so he resumed his vocal complaints. These ongoing distortions are a matter of record: two years after McCleery and Hinojosa complained to Faux and Spriggs, EPI was still distributing a press release depicting the 550,000 number as a *net* job loss, when in fact the model shows no net job loss. Now this distortion is the centerpiece of AFL-CIO anti-NAFTA commercials. Spriggs claims some of Hinojosa's narrative details are wrong—that, for example, Spriggs and Faux never asked Hinojosa to run the model. But I ran the basics of Hinojosa's story, including this point, past Faux, and he did not dispute it. As for Leamer's paper: by my reading, it wholly supports Leamer's repeated complaints that EPI distorted its conclusion. There is an odd pattern here: Spriggs knows more about Leamer's findings than Leamer does, and more about the Hinojosa-McCleery model than Hinojosa does. He must be a very smart man.

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Shame

To the editors:

In his review of *Never Stop Running*, John B. Judis stated that Allard Lowenstein "... grew ashamed of his Jewishness." This is an extreme interpretation of one of William Chafe's themes in the biography. Putting aside my frustration with biographers who never stop speculating, I cannot allow this misstatement to stand uncorrected. I urge both Judis and Chafe to make the distinction between "shame" and "discomfort." There is no statement made by Lowenstein that suggests his feeling *ashamed* of being Jewish. Furthermore, his efforts to seek out non-Jewish friends were just that, and constitute neither shame nor discomfort. WASPs who seek out non-WASP friends are not viewed as people ashamed of their WASP-ness, but people broadening the scope of their relationships, something Lowenstein had certainly decided to do when he made the choice to attend UNC–Chapel Hill in 1945—a year not marked, incidentally, for its low ebb of anti-Semitism. I was not interviewed for this biography, but many people could have directed Chafe to such things as the correct year of my birth and another far more reprehensible factual error in his book. My father's *body*, not his ashes, was interred at Arlington Cemetery; Jewish Law prohibits cremation. This error is both irresponsible and an added slap to my father's respect for his Jewishness, whether it was a sometime source of discomfort to him or not. For this Chafe should be ashamed.

KATE LOWENSTEIN
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

John B. Judis's review of William Chafe's biography of Allard Lowenstein ("The Activist as Hero," October 25) evokes an indelible fragment of memory of Lowenstein's uncanny ability to inspire an audience.

Lowenstein, who I believe had been a past president of the National Student Association, was a featured speaker at its 1957 national congress in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Without remembering any specifics, I recall two things very well. One is that he was, at least for an audience of 18- to 22-year-olds, perhaps the funniest speaker I had ever heard.

The other memory, especially bright, is of a remarkable oratorical capacity joined with a ringing call to the pursuit of justice. I have heard a lot of the great speeches of the century on audio and video tape and I have been present for many fine talks from various platforms. But Lowenstein, on that informal occasion, ranked with the best of them. There was something about the pitch and the passion of his voice, and his projection of commitment, that was extraordinarily energizing.

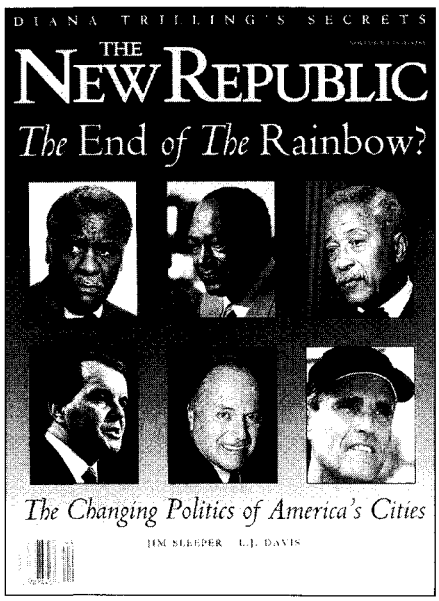
Students of the '90s have imbibed a lot more about the ambiguities of what "justice" means than did most of the members of my college generation. But this one image of Lowenstein, from a time of grander simplicities, provides a pretty good antidote: that of an unabashed commitment to the idea that there is such a thing as social justice, that it is worth striving for and that in some significant measure it is achievable.

MARSHALL S. SHAPO
Chicago, Illinois

Dehumanized

To the editors:

It was with difficulty that I finally determined the stance of Jeffrey Rosen's article "Reasonable Women" (November 1) to be sincere, and not satirical. He supports a definition of harassment currently advanced by "a surprisingly eclectic coalition of amicus groups," rooted in its effect on an employee's work capacity. He also casually mentions that Anita Hill and Teresa Harris, having only suffered "nervous cramps" and a drinking problem, respectively, would probably not succeed in a court case under the proposed definition. Is he suggesting that it is O.K. for a worker's private life to be ruined, as long as his or her professional life remains intact? And who is to determine whether or not the victim's work has been affected? The aggressor? If the new definition is enacted, competent women and men will have no legal protection unless they force themselves to break down both emotionally and professionally. Shouldn't the most important goal for sexual harassment policy be to protect people from feeling dehumanized in situations where they have a right to feel comfortable, and not merely to maximize efficiency?



ALICE CLAPMAN
Scarsdale, New York

The men's room

To the editors:

Eileen O'Keefe is of course correct in pointing out in her letter to the editor (Correspondence, November 8) that Andrew Sullivan was wrong to use the word "misanthropy" to refer to the hatred of male human beings. However, her suggested neologism for denoting this idea, "misandrony," is also faulty. Etymologically, it would have to mean the hatred of the men's room or clubhouse that was called the *andron* in ancient Greek. Before this flawed formation is used by anyone else, let me suggest instead "misandry": even though it seems to be unattested in English, the Greek original which it would represent, *misandria*, has some scanty attestation (with the desired meaning) in ancient Greek, and its meaning would be absolutely clear to any speaker of Greek, ancient or modern.

DONALD F. MCCABE
New Haven, Connecticut

Hmm

To the editors:

Regarding the November 1 Notebook item that told of a New Jersey man who sent a gorilla-gram to a black elected representative, resulting in his being charged with violating that state's anti-bias law, I have one thought.

The Phoenix Suns basketball team's mascot, in a sport dominated by blacks, is an acrobat (white) suited up in a gorilla costume. At every game, Suns fans get a gorilla-gram; gorilla antics and messages abound. If the Suns played in New Jersey, and the gorilla approached an African American child on the sidelines and did his exaggerated gorilla stuff, would he be guilty, likewise charged?

DONALD DAVITT
Prescott, Arizona

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Goals Not Gimmicks

There are a lot of radical ideas for school reform going around that attempt to handle the problem of raising student achievement with some kind of mechanical gimmick—like vouchers, charter schools or management of schools by for-profit companies. President Clinton's education bill, Goals 2000, is a welcome contrast to this gimmickry. It has been moving through Congress with little fanfare, but it goes to the heart of the problem by dealing with what we expect students to know and the kinds of incentives they need to learn.

The California voucher initiative called for using public funds to pay for private school tuition, and it tapped into some real, and justifiable, discontent with the public schools. But its answer was to encourage youngsters to move from public schools, which are not doing very well, to private schools, which—according to the research on student achievement—are not doing much better. The voucher gimmick puts schools in the business of attracting customers, a much easier job than educating students.

The reform Governor Engler wants in Michigan is also basically a gimmick. When the state legislature suddenly abolished the use of the property tax to pay for public education, the governor came up with a proposal that he says will fix the funding problem *and* reform the schools. In fact, his funding plan will lock in existing inequalities among school districts. And his charter schools proposal does nothing to address the real problem in education, which is the same in Michigan as it is nationwide—low standards for students and poor student performance.

Baltimore's scheme for fixing its failing schools is to bring in new management. It has hired Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI), a for-profit outfit, to run nine schools. EAI has painted, hauled away trash from the playgrounds and installed computers—all worthwhile things—but there's no word about a change in student achievement. Still, this is being called a successful education reform.

None of these schemes deals with curriculum or affects what goes on in classrooms between students and teachers. To get at those things, we need to establish clear and rigorous standards and a system of incentives with consequences for success and failure. This is much more difficult than moving kids from one mediocre school to another or painting school buildings, but it's the only way we'll get the results we need.

Goals 2000 promotes a rational system of education that will give us what successful school systems in competitor nations already have.

Goals 2000 takes on these tough challenges. It promotes a rational system of education that will give us what successful school systems in competitor nations already have: clear and high standards for what students should know and be able to do, assessments based on those standards and, eventually, clear consequences for achievement so students understand that what they do in school counts. Federal funding will encourage and help states to set up their own voluntary standards and assessments. And since the success of a standards-driven system depends on how well individual schools help students meet the standards, most of the federal funds will go to build the capacity of local school districts.

There was a lot of pressure—from the right and the left—to rewrite the bill in ways that would have made it worthless or even dangerous. But the President resisted. No bill was better than more of the same old thing, he said. Goals 2000 has already passed the House in a form that is close to the President's intentions, and, as this goes to press, it appears likely that the Senate version will be even better.

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act, a second piece of President Clinton's education package, tackles another difficult issue that gimmick-loving reformers ignore. Although this country devotes lots of resources to college-bound kids, we do little for the 50 percent of youngsters who go from high school into the job market. As a result, many bounce around for years from one dead-end job to another. This bill will draw on the few existing school-to-work programs that are successful in order to develop a national system. It also recognizes the need for strong academic preparation for youngsters who plan to go from high school to work. This kind of background is essential if young people are to qualify themselves for new and demanding jobs or seek a college education later on. That the bill reflects this link between education and work in the late 20th century is a product of the extraordinary cooperation between Secretary of Education Riley and Secretary of Labor Reich.

Vouchers, charter schools, for-profit management schemes are all quick fixes that won't fix anything. Goals 2000 involves time and patience to develop standards and curricula and assessments. Yet once we have the basic stuff of teaching, learning and achievement in place, we will have something solid. It isn't a headline grabber but it works.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1993 by Albert Shanker.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 29, 1993

"MEMBERS OF CONGRESS,

I know many of you are deeply opposed to the North American Free Trade Agreement. You truly believe it would do more harm than good. I feel sure you're wrong, but I'm not here to argue with you. It's too late for that. I'm here to talk to those of you who know in your hearts that NAFTA is a good thing but are afraid to be seen voting your conscience. I admit that your fears have a basis. You face the wrath of organized labor and of voters whose insecurities have been fanned by wild misinformation. I'm here to convince you to vote your conscience anyway.

"I know it seems forgivable to sit this one out. In its direct impact on America, NAFTA is no big deal. Most economists put the net job gains at 100,000 or 200,000 over ten years. NAFTA will also lower prices, but not massively. Illegal immigration will drop, but only in the long run. NAFTA brings no overnight miracle cures.

"My job tonight might be easier if this were the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. GATT *is* a big deal, and you know it. You know that hundreds of billions of dollars in world trade hang in the balance; you know the collapse of GATT could send stocks tumbling and turn recovery into recession, even depression. Well friends, I'm going to say this very plainly, because I don't want you claiming later that you didn't know what was at stake here: if you don't get me NAFTA, I can't get you GATT.

"I'll try, of course. But a NAFTA defeat would undercut the authority we need to get the best GATT deal we can. And once the protectionists have won on NAFTA, any GATT deal that's not the best possible will be doomed. If you think the reactionary elements in organized labor are playing hardball now, just wait until they taste blood.

"Most American workers still haven't heard the truth about NAFTA. Their so-called leaders seem to think they aren't smart enough to weigh both sides of an issue. [*Ten-minute indignant summary of untruths and half-truths in AFL-CIO literature and Ross Perot's book. . . .*] Maybe it's no coincidence that those who thus insult the intelligence of American workers also think those workers can't compete in the global marketplace. Well, American workers *can* think, and they *can* compete, and they don't need to be treated like children. If you vote no on NAFTA out of fear for your political life, that's your business. But don't pretend you're helping America's young workers. Each of the few jobs that NAFTA's defeat would protect will come at the expense of two or three better jobs; and "protecting" these few workers in the short run only assures their gradual vocational obsolescence. The only people who will truly gain from NAFTA's defeat are a few aging union leaders who will savor one or two last political victories and then retire, just as the chickens come home to roost.

"There is an eerie familiarity about the forces arrayed against NAFTA: isolationism, protectionism, xenophobia. They prevailed after World War I. America turned inward, and the rest is history. Now we are again at the end of a war, and the world again waits for our definition of self. And again we vacillate. How many in Congress knew in 1929 that passing the Smoot-Hawley tariff would help bring on the Great Depression? More to the point: How many knew in 1922 that passing the Fordney-McCumber tariff was the first step toward Smoot-Hawley? Pivotal moments are hard to see except in retrospect. I know some of you would like to take refuge in this uncertainty: Maybe defeating NAFTA *won't* lead to a ruinous chain reaction. Well, maybe not. But uncertainty is why principle matters. No, we don't know which protectionist victory will be the fatal one this time around. That's why we must fight for free trade at every juncture. Uncertainty dictates obedience to conscience; and if you invert this truth, and use uncertainty to rationalize retreat, you're betraying yourself and your country.

"If NAFTA and then GATT fall and economic recovery falters worldwide; if Eastern Europe and Eurasia descend into a new authoritarianism; if the credibility of this country abroad evaporates; if Mexico's political reforms fail and our relations with Latin America sour; if joblessness at home brings new demagogues who make us long for the relative innocence of Ross Perot—if all this happens, don't you come running to me for help.

"But if you need help today, I'm here. Tell union leaders that your president defined this vote as a matter of national security. Tell them that if NAFTA looks like a mistake three years from now, they can vote me out of office. I would rather face the judgment of voters after supporting NAFTA than face the judgment of history after opposing it. I urge you to make the same choice." •

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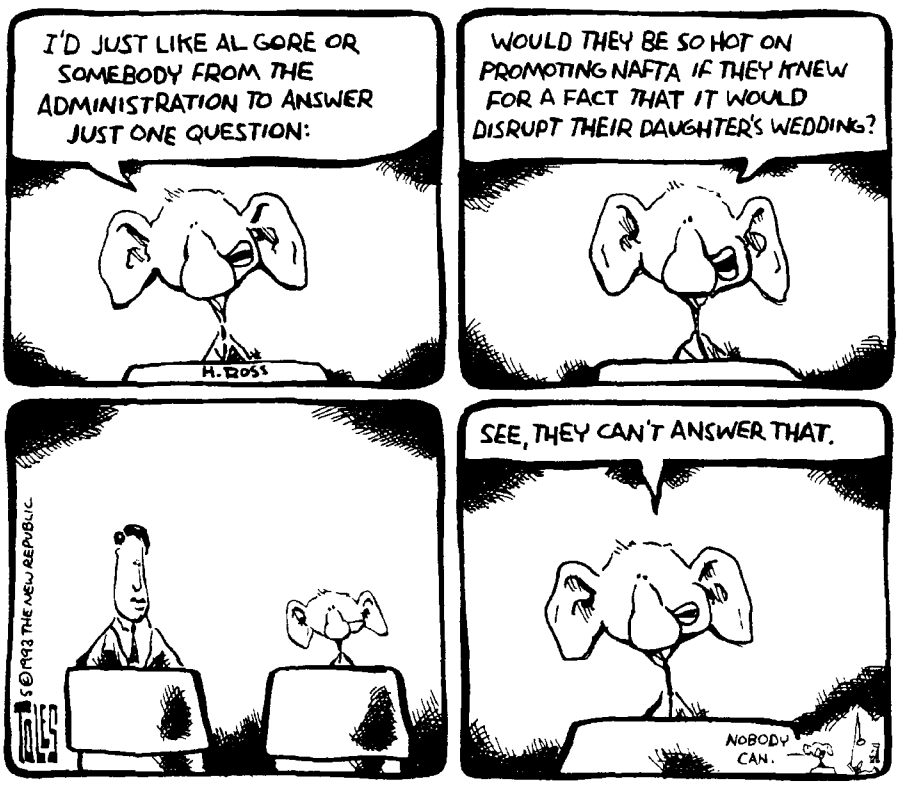
NOTEBOOK

THE GORING OF PEROT: Those who suspected the decision to pit Al Gore against Ross Perot was a disastrous miscalculation were proven wrong last Tuesday night. Gore showed that the way to deal with Perot is to confront him directly and watch him self-destruct. The vice president managed both to retain the composure of his office and to pummel Perot on the areas closest to his deranged ego: his hypocrisy in attacking lobbyists; his demagogic conspiracy theories; his failed predictions; his business foibles; his secretive refusal to disclose publicly where his money goes and for what; his puerile grasp of elementary economic facts. When Perot turned around to accuse Gore of not being able to see the truth even when it was right in front of him, the hollowness and bitterness and nuttiness of the Texan were clearer than they have ever been. There are two lessons for the Clintonites in this: whenever they publicly and honestly defend their often sensible policies, rather than spinning, dealing and horse-trading, they tend to win; and they have few more valuable assets than the vice president. They should do far more with him. Foreign policy, perhaps?


I'D JUST LIKE AL GORE OR SOMEBODY FROM THE ADMINISTRATION TO ANSWER JUST ONE QUESTION:
H. ROSS
WOULD THEY BE SO HOT ON PROMOTING NAFTA IF THEY KNEW FOR A FACT THAT IT WOULD DISRUPT THEIR DAUGHTER'S WEDDING?
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SEE, THEY CAN'T ANSWER THAT.
NOBODY CAN.

REVOLVING DOOR: The dismissal of Clifton Wharton from his No. 2 position at the State Department is at once an affirmative action comedy and tragedy. Wharton, who is black and whose experience in foreign policy was precisely zero, was clearly appointed largely for "diversity" reasons. For exactly the same reasons, it appears, he is now dispensable. Because his expertise was in other areas, Wharton never had any real input into foreign policy decision-making; and Warren Christopher was clearly desperate for a scapegoat for his own incompetence. So an African American, who never lobbied for the job, who had no responsibility for the State Department's recent blunders and who did his job competently for the short period he was there, is now asked to fall on his sword. There could be few clearer incidences of what lies behind panicked "diversity" hiring: a condescension to minority groups, a contempt for the people involved and a shoddy respect for their genuine professional skills and achievements. Wharton deserves an apology from the administration for the way he has been treated; and the real sources of foreign policy failure should be identified: Warren Christopher, and ultimately Bill Clinton himself.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE: "By all appearances, he [Gorbachev] wants for little. He is tanned, his business suit sits well, he has a house outside Moscow. His wife, Raisa, is recovering from a stroke, and recently broke her arm after slipping on snow."—*The New York Times*, November 3, 1993

(Thanks to Bruce K. Nichols, New York, New York.)

BEYOND RECOGNITION: "If the Palestinians and those who call themselves the Israelis can make peace, why can't we make peace in the United States?" —Benjamin Chavis, executive director of the NAACP, speaking to an audience at Mosque Maryam, Sunday, October 24, as part of the Chicago Gang Summit

BADERIAN SLIP: "Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg takes the oath to defend the Constitution from Chief Justice William Rehnquist . . ."—a photograph caption from the *Boulder Camera*, August 11, 1993

CABLE CAR:

Cable Rates Have Risen For Many, F.C.C. Says

—*The New York Times*, October 22, 1993

Survey: Cable costs dropped

—*New York Daily News*, same day

(Thanks to Al Prieto, Guttenberg, New Jersey.)

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NAIROBI POSTCARD

NAIROBBERY

By Joshua Hammer

Alison Coe won't be making many trips to the rugged Kenyan outback anymore. A British kindergarten teacher who's married to a United Nations employee in Nairobi, Coe was driving her 1992 Toyota Land Cruiser up to her residence in an affluent Nairobi neighborhood last July when six armed Kenyans pulled up behind her. They fired an AK-47 round through her window, forced her and her three young children onto the pavement, then sped off with the vehicle. A month later she bought a 1993 British Land Rover—"I thought Kenyan thieves only liked the Japanese four-wheel-drives," she says—but it didn't last long either. In September, eight men surrounded Coe in a Nairobi parking lot, pulled guns and knives and demanded her car keys. "I was very pleased with the way I coped this time," she said. "I just swore at them and handed them the keys, saying 'Oh no, not again.' "

Nairobi has always had a reputation for crime—many expatriates call it "NaiRobbery"—but nobody can remember a time when the city's nonindigenous community felt so insecure. Robberies and burglaries in posh neighborhoods are increasing at a record rate. Home security firms are doing their best business ever. And there's an alarming, sometimes murderous, new trend: armed carjackings, particularly of four-wheel-drive Toyota Land Cruisers, Isuzu Troopers, Nissan Patrols and Mitsubishi Pajeros (the last of which, unfortunately, I drive). According to the Kenyan Association of Insurers, auto thefts are up 300 percent in the last year. Since the summer of 1992 six foreigners have been killed in carjacking attempts in Nairobi, including a British citizen shot dead through his windshield while driving home from work on a busy road in May, and a Danish U.N. employee killed after he refused to hand over the keys to his Nissan.

Kenyans and Western observers alike blame the crime wave here on a number of factors—most of them linked to the government's blatant corruption. President Daniel arap Moi allegedly printed up millions of bank notes to buy votes in last January's presidential election. Shortly after that, the International Monetary Fund demanded that Moi devalue Kenya's currency by nearly 50 percent in an economic restructuring plan. Those twin pressures fueled an inflationary spiral that has nearly doubled prices on many basic commodities—sugar, milk, bread and the staple food, maize meal—and has made life increasingly hard for the *wananchi*, or common people. (Nearly 2 million of Nairobi's population of 2.7 million now live in areas considered shantytowns.) Police corruption is endemic and growing worse. One Asian Kenyan woman I know came home one day last spring to find $50,000 worth of jewelry stolen. When she reported it at the local precinct she noticed that the cop taking down the theft report was wearing her diamond ring. Add to that the easy availability of guns—many brought in from war-torn Somalia and the Sudan—and you've got big trouble.

My first encounter with Nairobi crime occurred last July, when my Pajero stalled at 10 o'clock one evening in the middle of a traffic roundabout downtown. Within minutes, two dozen young men surrounded the car, offering to "help." I had barely emerged from the vehicle when one made an unsuccessful lunge for my moneybelt, then raced off while I, foolishly, angrily pursued. The others sped after the would-be thief—rushing to help a foreigner in distress, I thought, until I realized they were all part of the same gang. The drama ended when the man whirled around and flashed an eight-inch Kenyan dagger, known as a *panga*, in my direction. I wisely gave up the chase.

I got another jolting sense of Nairobi's growing security problems last month when I moved into a three-bedroom house on three acres off Kitisuru Road, a lovely, jacaranda-lined street perched on a ridge overlooking a coffee estate. It was only after I signed the lease that I discovered a couple of unsettling facts about the place: Kitisuru Road is favored by armed carjackers because of its remote location and its proximity to U.N. headquarters, home to 1,000 expatriate employees and a parking lot full of spanking-new vehicles; and burglars had broken into the house twice in the past year, the second time disabling the alarms, smashing the $800 living room picture-window and carrying away $5,000 worth of jewelry, electronics and cash.

I thus began my initiation into the booming home-security business. Making one's house safe from armed marauders has become a ritualized affair in Nairobi; the guiding principle is to add layer upon expensive layer of protection. Following the example of longtime Nairobi residents, I installed a "rape gate"—a cast-iron locked grill sealing off the bedroom wing. I strung barbed wire across the rear garden fence and replaced its flimsy wooden door with a solid steel one. I placed halogen spotlights on the roof and in the trees, rigged infrared beams to detect any movement indoors and wired every window with a sensory-alarm system. I subscribed to Ultimate Security, a radio alarm system set off by six panic buttons placed throughout the house. Pressing one brings the mobile "Ultimate team" speeding to your door—as I discovered when I unwittingly triggered the button while moving in. Three minutes later, I found myself staring in astonishment at four uniformed, helmeted men carrying shields and nightsticks, along with a panting German Shepherd that lunged at my leg.

I decided against buying patrol dogs (or, in the case of one U.S. Embassy official I know, patrol geese). But I

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did invest in three round-the-clock guards, known in Kenya as *askaris*. The *askaris* come equipped with radio alarms connected to their own mobile security teams, but the men have considerable disadvantages: they tend to sleep through the night; they're unarmed and often run at the first sign of trouble; and most are treated so poorly by their companies (they work seven days a week, twelve hours a day, for $30 a month) that they have a terrific incentive to rob your place themselves. Some expatriates take a more unorthodox approach to hiring *askaris*: one British journalist I know has hired a squad of Masai warriors, all equipped with spears, bows and poisoned arrows.

None of my efforts guarantees invulnerability, of course. And I'm always nervous about driving my Pajero along deserted Kitisuru Road after dark. One night last week, as I climbed the hill toward my home, a vehicle pulled out from nowhere and followed me closely for about a mile. As I turned into my driveway, the car continued straight ahead. Relieved but shaken, I honked my horn at the gate for several minutes, but received no response. My *askari* was slumped in his chair, fast asleep.

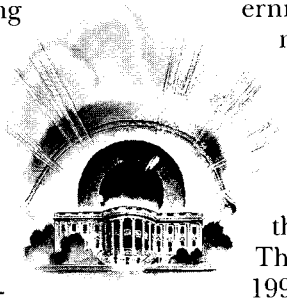
JOSHUA HAMMER is *Newsweek*'s Nairobi bureau chief.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

GOING, GOING ...

By Fred Barnes

As he finished an appearance before the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on November 1, President Clinton drew an analogy. The North American Free Trade Agreement, he said, "will pass for the same reason the budget passed." This was wrong. Believing it, though, Clinton is pursuing in the congressional fight over NAFTA the same strategy he did in the budget battle: schmooze, deal, pressure and plead to produce a coalition of narrow interests. For the budget vote last August, the president fashioned a coalition of mainly liberal interest groups (labor, minorities, etc.) and prevailed. But on NAFTA, that coalition disintegrates. So Clinton, appealing chiefly to economic interests, is trying to create what White House counselor David Gergen calls "a very different coalition." The difference is that the new coalition cobbled together by wheeling and dealing isn't a majority in the House, where the key vote occurs on November 17.



A critical element is missing from the president's strategy, namely the presidential card. Clinton hasn't played it. He hasn't elevated the NAFTA debate to higher ground by going beyond talk of jobs and trade. The model is when President Jimmy Carter made the case for ratifying the Panama Canal treaty in 1977. Carter urged members of Congress to ignore noisy opposition at home—indeed, ignore their personal political fate—and vote in favor of America's fundamental interest in maintaining leadership in the world. This was not an easy sell then, and it won't be now, especially for Clinton. He is more comfortable with the mundane argument that NAFTA creates jobs, promotes exports, makes friends and thwarts economic rivals such as Japan and Germany. And it's true NAFTA would do all that. But it involves more. The House vote is a defining moment in American history. At stake is whether America will lead the post-cold war world or drop out.

Clinton knows this. He makes the broader argument occasionally in private. But in public he has only hinted at it. NAFTA, he told the Chamber of Commerce, "has now acquired a symbolic significance for those of us who are for it." It provides us "the security of knowing that America is still marching in the right direction." At his press conference on November 10, Clinton said the NAFTA vote is "a defining moment for our nation"—but only economically. That was all.

Complains William Kristol, a pro-NAFTA Republican: "Clinton is such a creature of liberal, interest group, welfare-state politics that he seems incapable of framing an issue on a higher ground, or even recognizing he needs to." Vice President Al Gore is a creature of the same politics, yet in his strongest riff during the CNN debate with Ross Perot on November 9, he put the issue in perspective. NAFTA, he said, "is the kind of issue that comes along every forty or fifty years." He likened it to the creation of NATO, the Louisiana purchase and the acquisition of Alaska. If Gore can move to higher ground, why can't Clinton?

The president has done everything else to market NAFTA. "I don't know what else we can do," says NAFTA counselor William Daley. "Republicans said take on labor, take on Perot, go around the country. We did all that." And Clinton passed up his last chance to bail out on the treaty. When Canada elected a new Liberal government in October, "that was another opportunity to tank the thing," says a White House official. Abandoning NAFTA was "batted around" by senior aides. But Sandy Berger, the deputy national security adviser, and Gergen, among others, strongly opposed turning back, as did Clinton. This was the third time Clinton stuck with NAFTA in a pinch. The first was when he endorsed it during the 1992 campaign; the second as negotiations with Mexico neared completion last August.

The White House mounted a full-court press on Canada's new government. Mack McLarty, Clinton's chief of staff, talked repeatedly to the top aide of Prime Minister Pierre Chrétien. Berger dealt with Canadian diplomats. Special Trade Representative Mickey Kantor conferred with trade officials. Together, they worked

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out a deal. The Canadian government would do nothing before November 17 to press its quibbles with NAFTA, which Canada has already ratified, so long as its concerns are satisfied in other trade talks outside the NAFTA framework.

In touting NAFTA, Clinton takes his cues from polls showing that support for the agreement rises when the public hears specific arguments for it and learns who backs it. Thus, in Lexington, Kentucky, on November 4, he cited an obscure study that, he said, "shows that you can manufacture a car in America and put it in an American showroom for over $400 less than you can manufacture it in Mexico." During Q&A after the Lexington speech, he added: "Every living former president, every living former secretary of state, every living former secretary of the treasury, every living former Nobel Prize-winning economist and forty-one of the fifty governors have endorsed this."

In a pique, Clinton attacked organized labor for waging a holy war against NAFTA. Clinton aides had sought to persuade labor leaders to drop threats to bar campaign contributions to pro-NAFTA Democrats and run primary opponents against them. The Clintonites made some headway, and Clinton boasted of fresh checks sent by unions to Democrats who back the treaty. But when AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland learned of this, he stopped the checks, angering Clinton. Now one Clinton adviser refers derisively to Kirkland as "the only Ph.D. in the world who's against NAFTA."

The president also made deals. Wooing House members from Florida, his minions negotiated a snap-back provision with Mexico that reinstates old tariffs if there's a surge of Mexican fruit exports. To attract votes from sugar-producing states, they got Mexico to agree not to export sugar (it's now a sugar importer). To humor Iowa members, they leaned on Mexico to renegotiate tariffs on appliances (Maytag and Amana were anxious). "We've stripped the last shred of manhood from Mexico," an American official remarked.

Clinton tried to be bipartisan. He invited Republicans and Democrats to the same schmooze sessions. He took three wavering House members to play golf at the Army-Navy country club. He invited ten more to dinner. He scheduled an entire week of NAFTA events. But planning isn't everything. Hillary Rodham Clinton surprised the White House by stepping on the first day's event with a denunciation of health insurance companies.

Clinton's most important decision was to raise the stakes by going after Perot. When political adviser Paul Begala, fresh from Jim Florio's losing race for governor of New Jersey, joined the NAFTA effort, he was advised by White House aide Rahm Emanuel: "Take every press call on this and rip Perot apart." This happened even before Gore called Larry King with his debate challenge. Clinton learned of the challenge only later, but instantly approved. In the debate, Gore raised the stakes still higher. "This is a fork in the road," he said. "The whole world is watching."

Henry Kissinger and James Baker made the point even more compellingly at a White House event on November 2. "About once in a generation, this country has an opportunity in foreign policy to do something defining, something that establishes the structure for decades to come," said Kissinger. "So this is one of the crucial moments in the post-cold war period." Baker's speech was so good it prompted murmurs that he must have hired a new speechwriter (he had). NAFTA marks "a moment that ranks with America's entry onto the world stage in the 1940s, first to defeat fascism and then to lead the great alliance of democracies that fought and won the cold war," Baker said. Clinton tried to keep up. "Help us to give the Congress the freedom, the confidence, the courage that is inside every member of the Congress waiting to be brought out," he said. "Help to give them the space they need to take the steps they know are right for America." To get NAFTA ratified, the president will have to do better than that. •

Marketing California's exodus.

BLUE JEAN DREAMS

By Susan Ellicott

All it takes is a call to 1-800-OUT-OF-LA and a package from Greener Pastures Institute arrives two days later in the mail, fat with tips on how to escape Los Angeles. The design in green ink on the envelope is suitably bucolic. Cows with engorged udders stand in a field of flowers around a cottage. Clouds rise over a grassy horizon and birds dot the sky.

"What you hold in your hands is not just a publication," writes Bill Seavey, editor of the institute's quarterly newsletter. "It is the FIRST STEP TO A NEW LIFE." Seavey is something of a hero to disaffected middle-class residents of Los Angeles. He and other entrepreneurs have discovered that Angelenos will pay for advice on how to leave their fire- and riot-plagued metropolis. The marketers are offering self-help tapes, books, seminars, newsletters and telephone advice lines to guide the "urban opt-outs," as Seavey calls them, toward smaller towns where they presume their lives will be happier and more meaningful.

A couple of years ago, Seavey had 200 subscribers to his quarterly newsletter. This year, he has 3,000. They pay $25 for four issues or $45 for eight. Clients who prefer the personal touch pay $60 per hour for private counseling. Others choose his seminars. A conference in Pasadena titled "You Find Your Personal Eden" recently drew more than 300 people.

Inside my Greener Pastures envelope is an index of medium-sized U.S. towns rated for quality of life, includ-

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ing schools, tax rates, average salaries, open space, friendliness to outsiders and career choices. Billings, Montana, comes in first with Eugene, Oregon, and Springfield, Illinois, close behind. Especially enticing as the second LAPD helicopter of the day buzzes over my apartment is an advertisement for "thirty-one secluded acres" overlooking a river in Washington state. "We create a paradise service that will appeal to people's fantasies and dreams," says Seavey. "We help people looking for a total lifestyle change, people with a notion of what America once was and what it should be."

Among Seavey's fans is Warren Rekow, a soft-spoken engineer in his 30s whose son was almost abducted last year outside their home in Culver City, a modest residential area near the Columbia Pictures studios. Rekow telephoned Seavey after hearing him on talk-radio and the consultant suggested he think about the Northwest. Rekow and his family plan to move to Boise within a year. "People were friendly to the extreme and we felt we could have neighbors for miles around," he says. "It was a relief to find somewhere where I thought we could belong."

On a recent Sunday evening, Rekow joined a dozen or so equally disillusioned residents of Los Angeles for a pot-luck supper at the home of Eric Best, a software programmer. One woman guest, an artist, added avocados and figs from her garden to a spread of cheeses, popcorn, peanut cookies, cake, lemonade and cherry soda. Once a month, Best hosts support-group meetings to swap notes about smaller towns. A large "For Sale" sign graces the front lawn of his home, which is in a suburban part of Topanga Canyon, just off the Interstate 101 freeway.

High on the group's list of background material is Cassette Enterprises, a Pasadena-based mail-order firm. For $7 a shot, one can buy tapes to play during those irritating Los Angeles commutes. Among the nine titles are "How to Sell Your California Property When No One's Biting," by David T. Paul; "How to Mesh Your Life Mission With Your Change of Location," by Naomi Stephen; and "The Best Counties in the West," by Bill Kaysing. Fifty dollars, plus California's 8.25 percent sales tax, buys the complete set. Each comes stamped with the firm's logo, a rodent on wheels under the words "ESCAPE THE RAT RACE."

Many of the entrepreneurs who sell advice about leaving urban life like to think of themselves as the Ralph Naders of relocation. They distrust realtors and many small town officials as too pushy about selling their home turf. "The Chamber of Commerce always sends you the best photo of their town and never tells you about their toxic waste dump," says Ron, an aspiring Coloradan from Fresno. He doesn't seem to be exaggerating. One call to the Chamber of Commerce in Bend, Oregon, triggers a quick ten letters from salesmen. A glossy brochure from Mount Bachelor Village condos promises "the perfect place to live, work and play." Manzanita Properties urges me to "get on the bandwagon now in a very stable market."

Disenchanted big-city dwellers seem to be happiest taking advice from those who practice what they preach. Thus the success of Tom and Marilyn Ross, formerly of San Diego, now of Buena Vista, Colorado. The two are authors of *Country Bound! Trade Your Business Suit Blues for Blue Jean Dreams*, a leader in what booksellers call the "country-dreamer genre." From their home office, they publish an $89-a-year newsletter and organize "EduTraining retreats" for people who want to taste rural life before making the leap.

"Frankly, it's not right for everyone," says Marilyn. "If you are not creative about finding a way to support yourself, you probably won't make it." And she's got a point, for urban escape can be fraught with risks. Though Paulette Flohr, a speech therapist who moved to Canyonville, Oregon, from Southern California, is happily settled now, the first year was rough. There was a shortage of affordable housing and she ended up camping for a few weeks after a landlord sold her rented apartment. "Nobody could have prepared me for that," she says.

Competition for the advice market is getting stiff. From Bend, Tom Evons is running Escape L.A., which publishes a quarterly newsletter, *The Small Town Observer*. He drew 900 people at the Marriott in La Jolla last year for a lecture titled "Beyond California." His classes cost $29 an hour. Sensing a spreading sense of gloom across America's most populous state, he recently launched Escape San Francisco and Escape San Diego. More are expected. "Sure, competition causes some stress," he says, talking over the barking puppies of his beagle, Rosie. "But my philosophy is really 'the more, the merrier.' Urban Americans need to get back to their grass roots."

SUSAN ELLICOTT is the West Coast correspondent for *The Sunday Times* of London.

Diaries vs. truth-telling.

KISS AND LIE

By Rebecca Steinitz

In a recent interview, Yugoslav filmmaker Goran Markovic described an entry in his childhood diary: "When I was 9 or 10, I wrote in my diary, 'I love Tito.' I didn't do that because I was in love with Tito but because I was a little politician and I wanted to write something that would be good for me." Even as a child, Markovic knew that the truth often has nothing to do with what is written in a diary. This fact seems to have been lost on the U.S. Senate, which is currently laboring under the illusion that diaries—in this case those of Bob

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Packwood—are repositories of truth.

Why do diaries lie? Sometimes the absolute truth slips away during the course of revisions. The publication in 1989 of a critical edition of the much-loved diary of Anne Frank revealed that Frank herself had begun to revise her diary before her death, changing names, altering and expanding dialogue, omitting some events and adding others. Frank's father used her revisions as the primary source for the version of the diary that appeared in 1947, a version in which he removed passages about his daughter's developing sexuality and her conflicts with her mother. Though the diary conveys the essence of her experiences, it has a more complicated relation to truth than simple facts transparently recorded.

Recent discoveries about revisions to the diaries of Anaïs Nin complicate the relation even further. Though it covers the same time period, *Incest: The Previously Unpublished, Unexpurgated Diary, 1932-1934* differs substantially from Volume I of *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*. It reveals that a reconciliation with the author's father was actually a sexual affair; a miscarriage was really an abortion. Reading these changes generously, one could argue that Nin altered the original text to present herself in the best possible light. But a new biography, *Anaïs: The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin* by Noel Riley Fitch, states the case more harshly, asserting that Nin lied in all facets of her life and diaries, including in the original manuscript pages of her diaries.

Nin never acknowledged her departures from fact. Bruce Frederick Cummings, known more widely by his pseudonym, W. N. P. Barbellion, eventually did. Author of *The Journal of a Disappointed Man* (1919), Barbellion was a frustrated and egotistical naturalist who used his diary to express greatly exaggerated visions of his own grandeur. Determined to have his journal published after being diagnosed with a terminal illness, he faked his own death in its pages, adding, when he sent the text off to a publisher, that the author had died on December 31, 1917. Barbellion actually lived for two more years. Writing in his diary after the journal's publication, he rued his own lack of veracity: "I can see now that I made myself out worse than I am, or was. I even took a morbid pleasure in intimating my depravity.... If I had spoken out more plainly I should have escaped all this censure. The reviewers are only too ready to take me at my word, which is but natural." He knew that he had not told the truth, even though others failed to look beyond the surface of his words.

If one puts aside his final life-ending falsehood, which, strictly speaking, is not a part of the journal, the departures from truth in Barbellion's version of his life can be seen as an extreme case of subjective vision. Other fabricated diaries cannot bear the weight of such a postmodernist reading. In 1865, for example, the Scottish doctor Edward Pritchard constructed a diary devoted to mourning his wife in order to cover up the fact that he had murdered her. Unfortunately for Pritchard, his ruse failed and he was hanged. In his case the truth did win out against the evidence of the diary.

In a recent Fremont, California, murder case, however, the diary, or, more precisely, a diary, has won out against what the defendant's lawyers claim is the truth. This spring, a 15-year-old girl was convicted of murdering her 4-year-old sister on the basis of a diary entry in which she described committing the murder. During the original trial, the defense argued that the girl, known in the local media as "the diary girl," had fabricated the entry in an (obviously misguided) attempt to comfort her grieving mother. Now, a new attorney for the girl and her family has launched an appeal on the basis of another diary, which, the lawyer claims, proves that the first diary is a fake. As of this writing, no decision has been reached on whether the appeal can proceed.

Oddly enough, the most blatantly untruthful diaries—the forgeries—are those that generate the most interest. *The Diary of Jack the Ripper* seems to be following in the great tradition of the faked diaries of Adolf Hitler and Mussolini. Warner Books hastily abandoned its plans to publish the diary when an investigator concluded it was a fake. However, last month, Hyperion Press, counting on people to buy the book regardless of its truth value, published it, complete with the report that deemed it a forgery and a rebuttal from its British publisher touting its authenticity. The real irony here is that forged diaries allow us to cling to the self-delusion that real, truthful diaries exist.

If, however, diaries are not motivated by the desire to tell the truth, why do people keep them? One reason is sex. From the first real diarist, Samuel Pepys, who spiced up his pages with titillating macaronic records of dalliances with maids and the wives of underlings, to John Cheever, whose published diaries made headlines with their revelation of his bisexuality, diarists throughout history have been compelled to record their sexual adventures and thoughts. Even Senator Packwood, despite his claims that the diaries exonerate him, seems to have fallen prey to the compulsion to write about sex. He has claimed, ominously, that the release of his diaries would reveal the sexual secrets of other senators.

So, what about the Packwood diaries? The possibilities are infinite. Even assuming that the senator wrote down what he believed happened, the fact that he himself submitted the diaries to the ethics committee raises the suspicion that he could be carting around a revised, cleaned-up version. Casting our surmises wider, it is possible that, for the last twenty years, like Barbellion weaving the fantasy of a powerful life, the senator has been recording his sexual fantasies about lobbyists and staff aides. Conversely, like Pritchard the murderer, he could have been constructing a clean narrative to cover his tracks. Or maybe, like Nin, who used her diaries to work out her fiction, he has been making notes for a novel about sex and crime behind the Capitol's closed doors. People write what they want in diaries, and what they want as often as not has nothing to do with truth.

REBECCA STEINITZ, a graduate student in English at U.C. Berkeley, is writing a dissertation on diaries.

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SODOM AND DEMURRER

By Jeffrey Rosen

Courtroom Three, on the second floor of the Denver City and County Building, is a neoclassical jewel, with its mustard walls and gray Vermont marble and polished oak backboard. It is a platonic ideal of a courtroom, which is perhaps why Viacom commandeered it in the mid-1980s to film several episodes of the new "Perry Mason." At the producers' behest, local architects installed a pair of ornate, but scarcely functional, beaux arts chandeliers; and their dim orange glow makes it hard for the judge to see the witnesses without squinting. "There is never enough light in this courtroom," the Honorable H. Jeffrey Bayless complains repeatedly during the trial of Colorado's anti-gay rights amendment. "In this courtroom, there is darkness everywhere."

Transcripts of the trial will be pored over for years by supporters and opponents of homosexual rights, and by connoisseurs of judicial burlesque. But halfway through the eight-day trial, as the state of Colorado begins to argue that its citizens have a compelling interest in treating homosexuals differently than heterosexuals, only six members of the press have turned up; the bailiff unexpectedly ushers us into the well-appointed jury box. In front of us are two large documents: on the wall, a framed, gilded copy of the U.S. Constitution; on an easel by the witness stand, a blown-up version of Amendment 2 to the Colorado Constitution, ratified by 53 percent of Colorado's voters on November 3, 1992:

> NO PROTECTED STATUS BASED ON HOMOSEXUAL, LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL ORIENTATION. Neither the state of Colorado, through any of its branches or departments, nor any of its agencies, political subdivisions, municipalities or school districts, shall enact, adopt or enforce any statute, regulation, ordinance or policy whereby homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation, conduct, practices or relationships shall constitute or otherwise be the basis of, or entitle any person or class of persons to have, any claim of minority status, quota preferences, protected status or claim of discrimination.

The legal question, put simply, is whether the second document can be reconciled with the first. But legal questions scarcely seem relevant to the spectacle that is unfolding before us. Instead, both sides have called a parade of moral philosophers, classical historians, political scientists, solemn geneticists and think tank pamphleteers. All of the arguments about homosexuality that were presented to the voters of Colorado are now being rehearsed before Judge Bayless, a conscientious but bewildered local jurist whose usual docket consists of small-time contract disputes between Denver merchants. The baffled expression on his bland, pink face is an emblem for more general concerns about whether courts are competent to resolve the legal status of homosexuals in any kind of a principled way.

"The Honorable Denver District Court is now open for business!" At exactly 8:30 on Monday morning, Bayless is escorted to the bench and the lawyers take their seats. The solicitor general of Colorado, Timothy Tymkovich, is a tall, mild-mannered Republican, whose twitching brush mustache brings to mind the young Neville Chamberlain. His two associates are coarser: Jack Wesoky, a bald, gangsterish character in a white linen, double-breasted blazer and gray zoot-suit pants, and Gregg Kay, who wears a rat-tail haircut and a permanent sneer. The plaintiffs' lawyers are Gregory Eurich, an earnest and intense Denver trial lawyer; Jean Dubofsky, a former Colorado Supreme Court justice with the deliberate manner of Sandra Day O'Connor; and Jeanne Winer, a small, serious lesbian with straight black hair. Behind Eurich and Dubofsky sit their assistants, Natalie Bocock Turnage and Roderick Hills, who are also—full disclosure—my law school classmates and hosts for the trial.

The state's first witnesses, Tony Marco and Kevin Tebedo, are the authors of Amendment 2 and cofounders of a group called Coloradans for Family Values. Marco was, in the 1960s, a Marxist-Leninist who wrote a narrative song in forty-seven verses attacking the religious right and who shared an apartment with a gay man whose lover started the Stonewall riot. After a religious conversion, he became a direct mail fund-raiser for the Christian Broadcasting Network; now he and his wife try to persuade homosexuals to change their sexuality through a group called Dovetail Ministries. Tebedo insists "there was a lot of religion in the debate, but it all came from the opponent's side." On cross-examination, however, Winer confronts him with a campaign speech that he delivered at the First Congregation Church in Colorado Springs; and when Tebedo denies having

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made it, she presses a button on her tape player and his words come crackling over the speaker:

> Now the authority of man would dictate that homosexuality is perfectly O.K., that there's nothing wrong with it. The authority of God says no, that there is plenty wrong with homosexuality. From a moral, ethical, societal, governmental and political standpoint, in the eyes of Almighty God and the authority of His Word, homosexuality is an abomination to Him.

Tebedo and Marco have the manic appeal of authentic believers. The self-styled experts who follow, by contrast, come across as plastic apparatchiks. Robert Knight, the "Director of Cultural Studies" at Gary Bauer's Family Research Council, poses as an expert in the "media activities of the gay community." ("Having been on the 'Jerry Springer' show," he declares from the stand, "I have to conclude that these afternoon talk shows are overwhelmingly stacked toward the pro-gay viewpoint") Terry Schleder, head of Boycott Colorado, is called as an adverse witness. She wears a melodramatic gray paper dog collar and chain around her neck, to symbolize the enslavement of gays and lesbians.

The most distinguished witness for the defense is Harvey C. Mansfield Jr. of Harvard, the political theorist and translator of Machiavelli. Razor-thin and elegant, with his tailored blue suit, unnaturally youthful face and insinuating whisper, Mansfield is treated like a revered and expensive objet d'art by the state's lawyers, who are paying him $200 an hour. His testimony goes something like this: the initiative and referendum are products of the progressive era (here he winces slightly), designed to counteract the distance that the founders had established between the people and their representatives. Amendment 2 was designed to reduce the influence of factional local majorities; it promotes a "live and let live" policy that presents the least intrusive invasion into our lives and morals.

On cross-examination, Eurich approaches the stand with the relish of Darrow approaching a more dapper version of Bryan. Hadn't Mansfield said in his deposition: "Disapproval of gays is not like racial or gender discrimination; there is nothing wrong with being black or being a woman, but it is perfectly reasonable to think there is something wrong with being gay"? Mansfield, rubbing his eyes, confesses he had indeed said this. "Have you ever made an academic study of whether gays are happy?" "I've read ... Plato, Freud and Tocqueville. I had a conversation with a gay student once. Being gay is not a life that makes for happiness." "You said that gays were not socially responsible, didn't you?" Mansfield smiles and answers, "I was referring to their inability to raise families." "Is a person with two children more socially responsible than a person with one?" "In that regard, yes, although you might have a socially responsible reason for not having more than one child." "You said that you regard homosexual sex as shameful. But you think the same practices by *heterosexuals* are shameful, too, isn't that correct?" Shame and sex go together, Mansfield replies, blushing. "The question of shame is always involved in sex." Eurich leans in triumphantly. "And you believe that the view that homosexuality is respectable would *undermine human civilization*, isn't that right?" Mansfield slumps back in his chair and whispers with weary resignation: "Eventually."

Even more lurid debates are carried out in affidavits. Robert George of Princeton calls the testimony of Martha Nussbaum of Brown "almost totally misleading" because she translates the word *tolmêma*, Plato's adjective for homosexuality, as "deed of daring," or "adventure," rather than "abomination." Edward Eichel, author of a 1992 monograph called *The Perfect Fit*, swears that the juxtaposition of male and female genitalia has the potential for unique fulfillment through what he calls the Coital Alignment Technique. "The male same-sex experience," by contrast, "often escalates to anonymous and compulsive sexual behavior." On the last day of the trial, the state withdraws his affidavits without explanation.

Finally, the satyricon ends. The closing arguments are blissfully quiet and legalistic. Dubofsky suggests that if the words "members of the African American race" or "left-handed people" were substituted for "homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation," there would be no question that Amendment 2 is unconstitutional. "I feel like we're engaged in this trial in the Monday morning quarterbacking of an election campaign," says Tymkovich. "This court should not rest public policy on the gossamer strands of scientific testimony.... All Amendment 2 says is that we need to resolve this issue through the democratic process, after great deliberation, at the constitutional level." We are in recess, says Judge Bayless; and both sides shake hands, very gingerly.

"More interesting than the hollow buffoonery that remains will be the effect upon the people of Tennessee, the actual prisoners at the bar," H. L. Mencken wrote of the Scopes trial in 1925. "If the state is to be saved at all, it must be saved by the courts." But whether the courts have any business saving the people of Colorado is a more vexing question. The spectacle in Denver suggests, at the very least, that the efforts of gay rights advocates to win heightened judicial scrutiny for homosexuals is a treacherous path. There are three main legal theories for why laws against homosexuals should be rigorously reviewed by the courts: the suspect class theory; the political participation theory; and the sex discrimination theory. None of them is entirely persuasive.

Suspect Class Status: The Supreme Court currently recognizes six suspect classes under the Constitution (race, sex, national origin, ancestry, alienage and illegitimacy); and to discriminate against these groups, the state must satisfy the most rigorous standards of judicial review—that is, it must supply compelling reasons. To be added to this list, the Court has held, groups must

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demonstrate a series of characteristics, including political powerlessness; a history of discrimination; and obvious or immutable distinguishing characteristics. One of the unfortunate legacies of the Denver trial was Judge Bayless's decision to hear empirical testimony on the suspect class question, rather than simply reasoning by legal analogy as the state requested. So the entire panoply of arguments—with their whiff of the 1930s—came tumbling out: "As a group they're highly educated; they're extremely affluent; and if anyone says they're not politically powerful, I'd like to sell them a used car," Wilfred Perkins, the chairman of Coloradans for Family Values, told me in an interview at Perkins Fast Lube, his Chrysler dealership in Colorado Springs. "And how do you know what a homosexual looks like? One of the most effeminate guys I know is married with five kids." The same arguments were rehearsed, with empirical support, on the stand.

In trying to respond to these crude but powerful generalizations, Eurich and Dubofsky faced an uphill struggle. Because homosexuals have successfully constructed a formidable political organization, and operate at the highest—and lowest—levels of society, the characteristic of political powerlessness is highly contested. And since the whole notion of homosexuality as such is relatively recent, discrimination has historically focused on activities, rather than on persons, which makes it hard to prove a legacy of disadvantage. And the complex way in which homosexuality occurs in human beings—by general consensus a mixture of nature *and* nurture—has made it difficult to talk easily of "immutable" characteristics. In all these respects, nevertheless, homosexuals may have a stronger case for suspect class status than some of the minorities currently recognized as suspect, such as aliens. But the emotions the subject provokes and the lateness of the attempt to have homosexuals included have made the theory, in practice, hard to sell. No federal circuit has accepted the suspect class argument so far; and as the trial progressed, even Eurich and Dubofsky began to recognize it as a loser.

Political Participation: In its first ruling on the case last August, the Supreme Court of Colorado held that Amendment 2 violates gay voters' fundamental right to political participation by preventing them from lobbying local and state legislators for protection from discrimination. (The right to political participation is not mentioned in the Constitution; but the Warren Court invoked it in several cases involving election requirements for blacks in the 1960s.) Bayless is required to apply the political participation theory when he rules on Amendment 2, which means that he will probably strike it down as unconstitutional. But the theory is unlikely to convince the justices of the Rehnquist Court, who have traditionally given states broad discretion over their political structures.

Moreover, there are many provisions in the Colorado state constitution that withdraw particular issues from ordinary political debate, such as the amendment that prohibits legislators from holding the 1976 Olympics in Denver; or the one that prevents Mothers Against Drunk Driving from lobbying for compulsory Breathalyzer tests. Supporters of Breathalyzer tests, and supporters of gay rights, are free to fight for the repeal of the amendments through the initiative process. But if a group could claim to be disfranchised every time it loses a constitutional amendment debate, then most state constitutions would be called into question.

Sex Discrimination: This theory, proposed by Andrew Koppelman of Princeton and Sylvia Law of NYU, is the most quirkily interesting of the three; and it's the one that prompted the Supreme Court of Hawaii to strike down a ban on gay marriages last May. Laws that permit women to marry men but forbid women from marrying women are, the court held, a form of sex discrimination. The argument that marriage by definition can only be entered into by people of different sexes is the same kind of argument as that used in miscegenation cases. In the 1964 *McLaughlin* case, the Supreme Court said that miscegenation laws that forbid blacks and whites from marrying each other are unconstitutional, even though they are based on longstanding custom and moral disapproval, because they promote stereotypes about white supremacy. Relying on the equal rights amendment in the Hawaii Constitution, the Hawaii Court suggested that banning gay marriages, similarly, reinforces stereotypical gender roles.

If the Hawaii court's interpretation of the Hawaii Constitution is not overturned by the voters, or reconsidered by the Hawaii justices, it cannot be disturbed by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Denver plaintiffs are relying on the sex discrimination theory to argue that Amendment 2 denies civil rights protection on the basis of sex. Although the theory might appeal to Ruth Bader Ginsburg, it requires a degree of sociological abstraction that is open to question.

The effort to win special judicial protection for sexual orientation seems, in short, a hazardous affair. Should courts, therefore, defer entirely to the political process on the question of homosexual rights? Not necessarily. Rather than seeking special judicial protection for homosexuals, the ACLU and other gay rights advocates are increasingly arguing that certain forms of discrimination are irrational on their own terms.

Courts are properly reluctant to conclude that the state's post hoc reasons are irrational; and so the "rational basis" test is traditionally very easy for the state to satisfy. In the past year, however, three federal courts have struck down the exclusion of gays from the military under the rational basis test. Even if homosexuals actually do threaten "unit cohesion" and Navy recruitment, the *Dahl* court held in California last August, this is only so because some heterosexuals fear and disapprove of homosexuals. Their moral disapproval, the court held, is directly analogous to the "negative attitudes" of local property owners toward the mentally

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retarded, which the Supreme Court invalidated in 1985 as a form of "private bias" and "illegitimate prejudice."

In light of the judiciary's traditional deference to the military, it seems unlikely that these decisions will stand up on appeal. But the jurisprudential insight—that laws discriminating against homosexuals should have to be justified with rational arguments rather than irrational anxieties—may be stronger in the context of Amendment 2. For it is at least arguable that Colorado has failed to provide rational reasons for preventing homosexuals from seeking the protection of civil rights laws that already protect not only blacks, women and religious minorities, but also smokers, the handicapped and unmarried heterosexuals.

There are, of course, perfectly rational arguments—and they were heard in Colorado—against homosexual sex. But these arguments, almost all of them deriving from Roman Catholic or natural law traditions, are directed against homosexual *acts*, not people, and should extend to nonprocreative sex by heterosexuals as well. By this logic, however, the laws of Colorado are not rationally consistent. The fact that single people are protected makes it hard to argue that the voters of Colorado have a general moral aversion to nonprocreative sex. A high point of the trial was Robert George's announcement that landlords should be free to refuse to rent apartments to people who masturbate or use contraception. On cross-examination, however, George was forced to concede that housing discrimination against masturbators is illegal in Colorado; and that few Colorado voters appear to share his rigorously consistent, Thomist views.

The state presented no rational arguments against homosexuals *as such*; and anti-homosexual legislation directed at individuals rather than activities is arguably based on personal aversion rather than moral argument. Also, if judges must roll over every time the state incants the "M" word, judicial review would mean very little. Perhaps a slim Supreme Court majority could be persuaded to draw a clean line between private bias, and legislation aimed more generally at public welfare, such as the bar admissions standards in Colorado, which define good moral character in terms of honesty and probity.

Apart from moral aversion, are there other rational reasons for Amendment 2? The medical justification—that the state has an interest in discouraging homosexual behavior because it is a danger to public health—is undermined by Colorado's decision to protect the civil rights of smokers. Then there is the widespread fear that in an age where the line between negative and positive discrimination has been increasingly blurred, protecting homosexuals from discrimination will lead, inexorably, to affirmative action. But a more rational response to this fear would be to ban quotas.

A member of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission testified that adding homosexuals to the civil rights laws would divert resources from traditionally protected classes, such as blacks and women. But Jerome Culp of Duke Law School responded that in cities that prohibit anti-gay discrimination, the complaints generally make up about 3 percent of the total case load. A black pastor from the Second Baptist Church in Boulder, quoting Romans 13 in stentorian tones, testified that Amendment 2 would safeguard the religious liberty of churches, which prefer not to hire homosexuals. But rather than prohibiting all legal protections for homosexuals, it would surely be more rational to require cities that choose to protect gay rights to carve out an exception for churches, and small landlords, as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act does.

Finally, the state argues that denying civil rights protections for homosexuals protects the "psychological and physical well-being of children." The suggestion that "homosexuals are notorious practitioners of sex with minors" seems to be irrational: the Denver director of child advocacy testified that children are "100 times more likely to be molested by the heterosexual partner of a relative than by a gay or lesbian relative." But the broader notion—that the state has an interest in stigmatizing homosexuality to discourage children from becoming homosexual—isn't easily dismissed, given the uncertainty that continues to surround the psychological causes and effects of sexual orientation. Still, the anti-gay cohorts are on weak ground here themselves: if you believe (as they do) that homosexuality is a psychiatric disorder, discrimination against homosexuals might well be prohibited by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Given the fact that the civil rights laws of Colorado now protect smokers and masturbators and virtually every other imaginable group, it is possible to imagine a judicial opinion that would strike down Amendment 2 under an unusually exacting (and frankly somewhat novel) rational basis test. It is even conceivable that five members of the U.S. Supreme Court might be persuaded by the argument—the four dissenters who emphasized in the *Heller* case last June that discrimination against the mentally retarded reflects irrational private biases, now joined, perhaps, by Justice Ginsburg. An opinion along these lines would look something like *Reed* v. *Reed*, the 1971 case in which Ginsburg exposed the inadequacy of the Court's existing legal categories, and convinced the justices to strike down as irrational a law preferring men to women as estate administrators.

The spectacle in Colorado, in which experts who were hardly expert lectured a judge who was scarcely qualified to judge, tends to rattle one's faith in the competence of the courts to second-guess the rationality of the state. Under the guise of modesty, this muscular rational basis test may indeed exalt judges to a potentially unsettling degree. And H. Jeffrey Bayless should never have set out to resolve the historical, ethical and scientific mysteries of homosexuality. Courts can, however, insist that distinctions among individuals are based on reasoned arguments rather than anxieties; and some arguments are more convincing than others. •

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The barriers that shut women up.

ARE OPINIONS MALE?

By Naomi Wolf

What is that vast silent wavelength out on the opinion superhighway? It is the sound of women not talking.

Despite women's recent strides into public life, the national forums of debate—op-ed pages, political magazines, public affairs talk shows, newspaper columns—remain strikingly immune to the general agitation for female access. The agora of opinion is largely a men's club.

A simple count of the elite media bears out the charge. In 1992, the putative Year of the Woman, "Crossfire" presented fifty-five female guests, compared with 440 male guests. Of the print media, the most elite forums are the worst offenders: according to a survey conducted by Women, Men and Media, during a one-month period in 1992, 13 percent of the op-ed pieces published in *The Washington Post* were written by women; 16 percent of the articles on the *The New York Times* op-ed page were by women. Over the course of the year, THE NEW REPUBLIC averaged 14 percent female contributors; *Harper's*, less than 20 percent; *The Nation*, 23 percent; *The Atlantic Monthly*, 33 percent. *The National Interest* ran the remarkable ratio of eighty male bylines to one female. *The Washington Monthly* ran thirty-three women to 108 men; *National Review*, fifty-one female bylines to 505 male (and twelve of those female bylines belonged to one columnist, Florence King). Talk radio, an influential forum for airing populist grievances, counts fifty female hosts in its national association's roster that totals 900. Eric Alterman's book about opinion-makers, *Sound and Fury*, chronicles female pundits only in passing.

What is going on here? Is there an unconscious—or conscious—editorial bias against women's opinions? Or are opinions themselves somehow gendered male—does female socialization conspire against many women's ability or desire to generate a strong public voice?

The answer to the first question is an unhesitant yes: on the nuts-and-bolts level of feminist analysis, women are being left out of the opinion mix because of passive but institutionalized discrimination on the part of editors and producers. General-interest magazines, newspapers and electronic forums tend to view public affairs as if they can be clothed exclusively in gray flannel suits, and rely on an insular Rolodex of white men.

In self-defense some male (and female) public opinion editors point to the allegedly "personal" way in which women tend to write about politics and express their public opinions. Women are accused of writing too much about their "feelings" and their "bodies"—as if such subjects were by nature ill-suited to respectable public discussion. And yes, this charge has some merit. But a double standard is at work here. Men, too, write about their feelings and bodies, but that discussion is perceived as being central and public. Though masculinists lay claim to passionless "objectivity," "logic" and "universality" as being the hallmarks of male debate, a glance shows how spurious is their position. What, after all, was the gays-in-the-military debate except a touchy-feely all-night boys-only slumber party, in which Dad—in the form of Sam Nunn—came downstairs to have a bull session with earnest youths lying on bunk beds? What were the snuggled-up military boys asked about but their feelings—feelings about being ogled, objectified, harassed; fears of seduction and even rape? Had it been young women interviewed in their dorm rooms about their fears of men, the whole exercise, cloaked in the sententious language of "national preparedness," would have been dismissed as a radical-feminist fiesta of victim-consciousness, encouraging oversensitive flowers to see sexual predators under every bed.

Indeed, the nationalism of German skinheads, the high melodrama of the World Cup and the recent convulsion of Japan-bashing—all of these are, on one level, complex sociopolitical developments; on another, they are a continuing global C.R. session on vulnerability and self-esteem conducted primarily by men about men. One could read the Western canon itself as a record of men's deep feelings of alternating hope and self-doubt—whether it recounts Dick Diver destroying himself because his wife is wealthier than he, or King Lear raging on a heath at the humiliation of being stripped of his world.

So women and men often actually theorize about par-

NAOMI WOLF is the author of *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the Twenty-First Century* (Random House).

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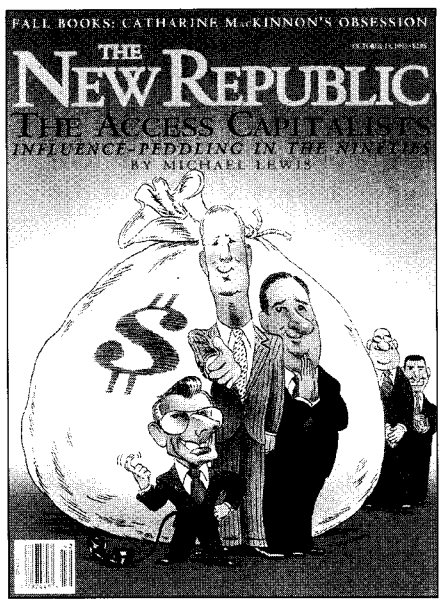

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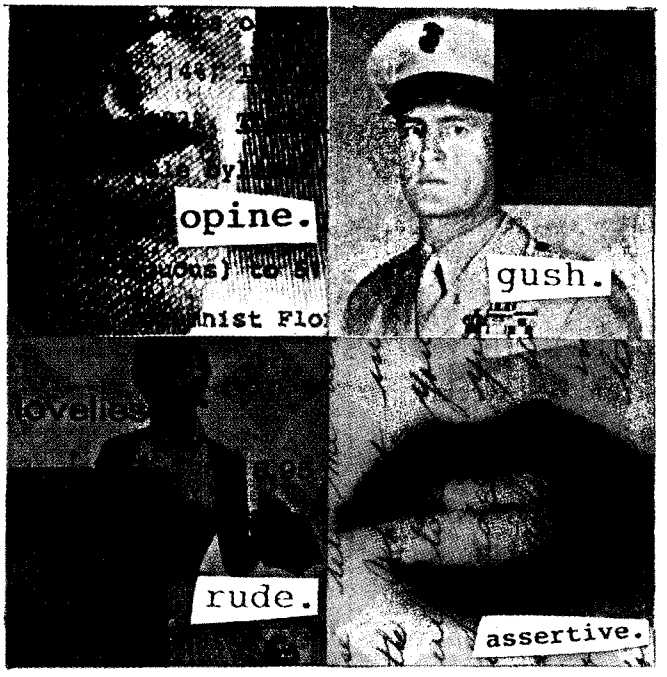
allel experiences, but the author's maleness will elevate the language as being importantly public, while the author's femaleness stigmatizes it as being worthlessly private. Women writing about the stresses and failures of maternity, for instance, are deviating onto the literary mommy track, but when men write about the stresses and failures of paternity, they are analyzing "the plight of inner-city youths," "cultural breakdown" or "child abuse hysteria." A woman recounting her own experience of systematic oppression is writing a "confessional"; but when a man writes intensely personal, confessional prose—whether it is Rousseau in his *Confessions* or Bob Packwood in his diaries—he is engaged in pioneering enlightenment, or, even in William Safire's terms, acting as "a Pepysian diarist ... [who] has kept voluminous notes on life as a lightning rod."

Of course, many women write about issues unmarked by gender, from city council elections to computer chips. But when women talk about politics, culture, science and the law in relation to female experience—i.e., rape statutes, fertility drugs, misogyny in film or abortion rights—they are perceived as talking about their feelings and bodies. Whereas when men talk about their feelings and bodies—i.e., free speech in relation to their interest in pornography, gun ownership in relation to their fear of criminal assault, the drive for prostate cancer research in relation to their fears of impotence, new sexual harassment guidelines in relation to their irritation at having their desire intercepted in the workplace—they are read as if they are talking about politics, culture, science and the law.



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Thus, much of what passes for rational public debate is an exchange of subjective *male* impressions about *masculine* sensibilities and the *male* body—an exchange that appears "lucid" and "public" because men arrogate the qualities of transparency and generalization when discussing male emotions and the experiences of male flesh, but assign to women the qualities of opacity and particularity when they discuss their own.

The lack of media oxygen for women writers of opinion can strangle voice, putting them into an impossible double bind. Many women also write from a personal vantage point alone because they feel it is one realm over which they can claim authority. As Jodie Allen, an editor at *The Washington Post*, puts it, "When they sit down to write, they think, why should anyone listen to me? At least if I take it from the 'women's' point of view, they can't deny I'm a woman. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy." With the "public/male, private/female" split so schematized, many other women writers of opinion must assume "the female perspective," as if shouldering a heroic but cumbersome burden. They are forced, by the relative paucity of female pundits at the highest levels, to speak "for women" rather than simply hashing out the issues in a solitary way.

This extreme is represented sometimes by an Anna Quindlen, whose "maternal punditry" beats a lonely drum on the guy terrain of the *Times* op-ed page. The meager allocation of space for female pundits at the highest levels, what Quindlen calls "a quota of one," does indeed force the few visible women writers of opinion who take a feminist stance into becoming stoic producers of that viewpoint, counted upon to generate a splash of sass and color, a provocative readerly-writerly tussle, in the gray expanses of male perspectives and prose. Editors seem to treat these few female pundits as cans in six-packs marked, for instance, "Lyrical African American Women Novelists"; "Spunky White Female Columnists with Kids"; or, perhaps, the reliable category, "Feminists (Knee-Jerk to Loony)." As Quindlen once remarked, a newspaper editor explained that he could not syndicate her column because "we already run Ellen Goodman." Popular discourse treats such writers as sound bite producers when it needs someone to say "multiculturalism is good" or "rape is bad."

So the few "pundits of identity" achieve, in the minds of those who decide what ideas inhabit the op-ed pages and who should argue with whom about what, a hard-won commerce in the perspectives inflected by gender, or by gender and race. But few can hope to take for granted the sweet oxygen that any writer needs in order to flourish: space to speak for no one but oneself.

The other extreme of the female public voice is perhaps represented by a Jeane Kirkpatrick: a voice so Olympian, so neck-up and uninflected by the experiences of the female body, that the subtle message received by young female writers is: to enter public voice, one must abide by the no-uterus rule. This voice gives a publication the benefit of a woman's name on the title page, without the mess and disruption of women's issues entering that precious space. This is the message absorbed by the legions of young women I meet. Though many writers are avidly trying to seek it out, we still lack the space and encouragement to range from the

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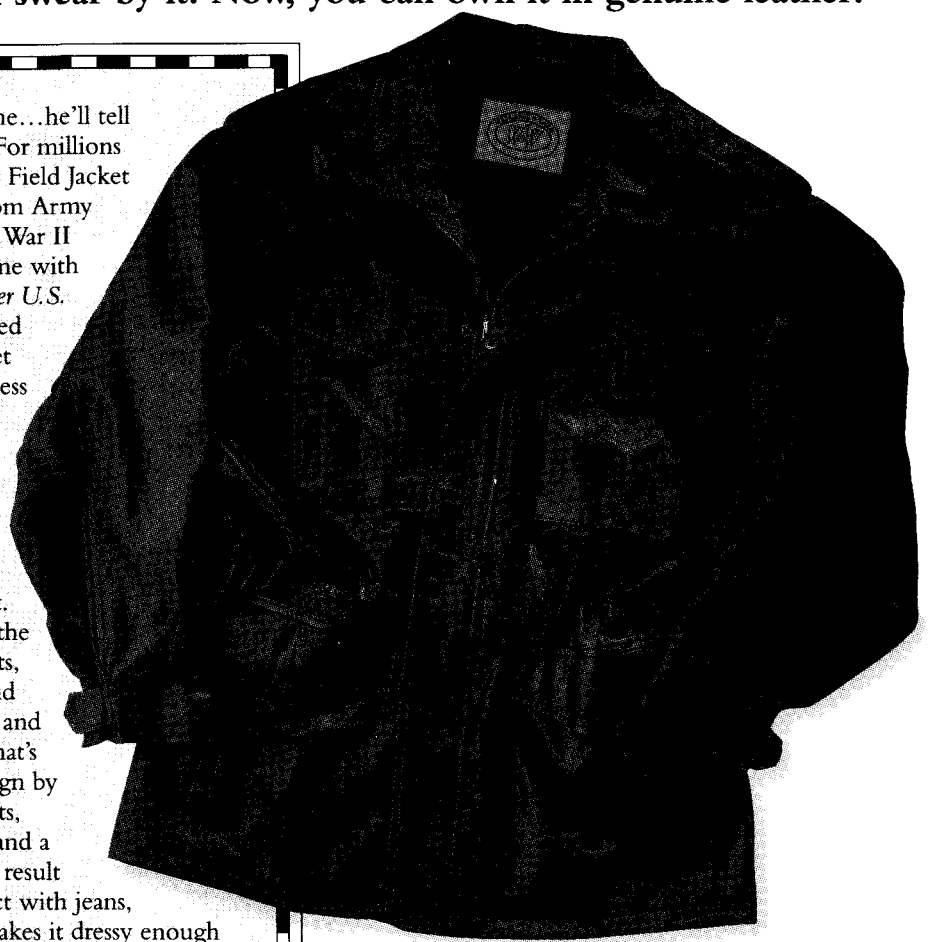

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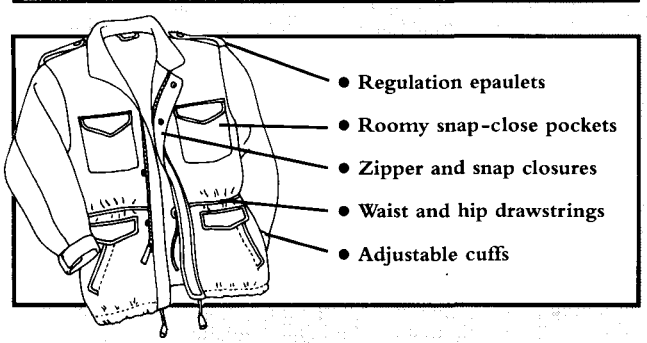

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personal to the political, from identity to universality, with the ease and un-self-consciousness assumed by men.

So women are left out, or included under conditions of constraint. But do we leave ourselves out of the public forum as well? When I have asked editors at THE NEW REPUBLIC, *The Washington Post*, *Harper's* and *The New York Times* op-ed page about the gender imbalance in their forums, this is the overwhelming message. Women simply do not submit articles in the same numbers that men do. And this is accurate: during one randomly selected month at TNR (February 1992), eight women submitted unsolicited manuscripts, versus fifteen men; during another month (October 1993), the ratio was eight women to fifty-five men. According to Toby Harshaw, staff member of *The New York Times* op-ed page, in the morning mail of November 8, of about 150 unsolicited manuscripts, the ratio of men to women was 10-to-1.

Why is this? Some editors argue that one reason for the imbalance is that women have not yet reached the highest echelons of public life: "Our biggest groups that submit are think tanks, lawyers, universities and government officials," says Harshaw. And the overwhelming majority of pieces from these groups, he notes, are by men. Yet while that argument has some validity, it cannot account for the extent of the imbalance: at the middle ranks of the law and the academy, women are reaching parity with men. What makes many women reluctant to write and submit opinion journalism, compared with men?

There is, I think, a set of deeply conditioned, internal inhibitions that work in concert with the manifest external discrimination to keep fewer women willing to submit opinion pieces, and to slug it out in public arenas. The problem is not, of course, that women can't write. They write, one can argue, with more facility than men do: women have dominated the novel—at least in its popular form—since its birth; and, if anything, social enculturation encourages girls to be more literary than most boys. No, the problem is that the traits required by writing opinion journalism or appearing on adversarial public affairs shows are often in conflict with what are deemed "appropriate" female speech patterns and behavior.

Dr. Deborah Tannen, the Georgetown University linguist, asserted that women and men often speak in different ways—women seek intimacy and consensus, she claims, while men seek status and independence. She notes that boys are raised to see boy-to-boy conflict as a way to express bonding, while girls are raised to avoid conflict in their play and enforce consensus. Psychologists Jean Baker Miller and Carol Gilligan suggest that women are more "relational" and men more "autonomous."

I don't agree with Miller or Gilligan that these tendencies are due to any primal psychic development; but women are surely encouraged to show such traits by virtue of social conditioning. And the act of writing an opinion piece—or appearing on "Crossfire"—calls for skills that are autonomous, contrarian and independent (not to say bloody-minded). Writing opinion journalism is a cranky, self-satisfied and, in traditionally feminine terms, extremely rude way to behave in public. The momentum to thrash out an opinion piece often begins with the conviction that others are wrong and that oneself is right, or that others are not saying the one thing that must be said. One is not *listening*; one is not set on enhancing others' well-being; one is certainly not demonstrating a "fusion of identity and intimacy," which pursuit Gilligan claims motivates women.

Unfortunately, you can't write strong, assertive prose if you are too anxious about preserving consensus; you can't have a vigorous debate if you are paralyzed with concern about wounding the sensitivities of your opposite number. Writing a bold declarative sentence that claims that the world is this way and not that, or that President Clinton should do X and is a fool to do Y, demands the assumption of a solitary, even arrogant, stance. In Gilliganesque "different voice" terms, it is lonely and emotionally unrewarding; it is, according to such theories, almost by definition an engagement in "masculine" values and patterns of speech.

Without a countervailing encouragement into speech, the social pressure on women to exhibit "connection" and suppress "autonomy" can inhibit many women's public assertiveness. Tannen describes English Professor Thomas Fox's observations of male and female freshman students' different approaches to writing analytical papers. He looked at a Ms. M. and a Mr. H. "In her speaking as well as her writing [to be read by the class]," Tannen reports, "Ms. M. held back what she knew, appearing uninformed and uninterested, because she feared offending her classmates. Mr. H. spoke with authority and apparent confidence because he was eager to persuade his peers. She did not worry about persuading; he did not worry about offending." But in Ms. M.'s papers that were to be read only by the professor—her "private" writing—Ms. M. was clear, forceful and direct. In this anecdote we see, essentially, that of the two, Mr. H., at 17, is being socialized to write opinion journalism and shout down interruptions on "The McLaughlin Group"; whereas Ms. M. is being socialized to write celebrity puff pieces in *Entertainment Weekly*.

Many women are raised to care—or to feel guilty if they don't care—about wounding the feelings of others. And yet, to write most purely out of herself, a writer must somehow kill off the inhibiting influence of the need for "connection." The woman writer of opinion must delve into what early feminists called "the solitude of self." When Camille Paglia claims that women have not produced great artists for the same reasons that they have not produced a Jack the Ripper, she touches, perhaps inadvertently, upon a real creative problem for women: fidelity to nothing but one's own voice can in fact depend upon a kind of radical solipsism, an ecstatic, highly unfeminine disregard for the importance of others if their well-being obtrudes upon the emergence of that transcendent vision.

Virginia Woolf returned often in her diaries to this theme, to the need to be impervious both to criticism

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and approval: "I look upon disregard or abuse as part of my bargain," Woolf wrote. "I'm to write what I like and they're to say what they like." Woolf's opinion of unsuccessful women's novels says volumes about the social disincentives many women face in writing damn-the-torpedoes opinion pieces: "It was the flaw in the center that had rotted them. [The novelist] had altered her values in deference to the opinions of others." And yet the world conspires against us, and within us, to have us do just that.

This internal dilemma is compounded by an external convention: even for the many women who are willing and eager to express strong opinions, conventions about how women are permitted to speak in print or on T.V. hem them in. The authoritative female voice asserting judgments about the real world is an unseemly voice. The globalizing tone that the conventions of opinion journalism or T.V. debate require involves an assumption of authority that women are actively dissuaded from claiming. A female writer of opinion at the *Post* concurs: "Op-ed language is the language of a certain level of abstraction; this is a language more often used by more men because more men are expert at it—you have to learn that language." As Professor Rhonda Garelick, who teaches French literary theory at the University of Colorado, put it to me, "It is just now becoming true for me that I can make 'sweeping' statements. But even as I make them, I am aware that it is an unusual verbal structure for me because I'm a woman. And I am always pleasurably surprised when they are accepted. The effect is good, but it is certainly something I am trained not to do by a lifetime of being a woman. I always opted for carefulness, precision, detail in what I said or wrote—but to take that leap [and write]: I must mean this large thing—that is disconcerting. And that's what opinion journalism is."

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM PRESTON FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Since the authoritative voice can be so disconcerting for many women to use, women writers often have turned to fiction to give safe cover to their longing to express their political points of view: *Jane Eyre* conceals a passionate outburst about feminism; *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sugar-coats an anti-slavery polemic. As Emily Dickinson warned, "Tell all the truth but tell it slant." A prominent feminist muckraker keeps on her refrigerator the motto, "Tell the truth and run."

We know as women that the act of "taking a position" in a sweeping way—"standing one's ground" above one's own byline, asserting one's view about the world of fact rather than fantasy—is a dangerous one, an act that will be met with punishment. When I have interviewed college women about their fears of leadership and public voice, they often use metaphors of punitive violence when describing their anxiety about expressing opinions in public: "having it blow up in my face"; "I'll be torn apart"; "ripped to shreds"; "they'll shoot me down."

Punishment—is that not too strong a word? This is the end of the twentieth century, after all; women no longer need to write under pseudonyms to conceal the force of their opinions. Yet when we look at what happens when women "take a stand," the common female fear of punishment for expressing an opinion suggests no phantom anxiety. A woman who enters public debate is indeed likely to be punished. A complex set of rules ensures it. Some involve ad feminam attacks: the absurd attacks on Chelsea Clinton's appearance that flitted across the public stage in the last year or so were in fact attacks on her mother, a message to all women contemplating entering public life that their children can be held hostage in retribution.

Others involve chivalry: when a woman tries to argue with men—as Rodham Clinton did in presenting her views on health care—the debate can be neatly sidestepped by labeling her "charming" and "disarming." These terms ensure that she cannot be seen to fight and win by virtue of her wits, for her potential adversaries preemptively "disarm" themselves—yield their weapons—and let themselves be "charmed"—go into a trance of delight that, presumably, mere reason cannot penetrate. Rodham Clinton's experience eerily re-evokes the debate-evasive reaction that Virginia Woolf anticipated after she finished the immensely (if elegantly) confrontational essay that became *A Room of One's Own*: "I forecast, then, that I shall get no criticism, except of the evasive, jocular kind ... that the press will be kind and talk of its charm and sprightliness; Also I shall be attacked for a feminist and hinted at for a Sapphist.... I am afraid it will not be taken seriously."

Still others involve stigmatizing the woman's anger: if the female antagonist is less than universally admired (or doesn't happen to be married to the president), she is called "shrill," as Geraldine Ferraro was when she debated George Bush ("rhymes with rich"). Female radio personalities have told me that when they ask male guests tough questions, their listeners call in and

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tell them to stop being rude to the men. It was front-page news when, in a speech, President Clinton lost his temper at the press—something that a cool-headed leader is rightly expected not to do; but it was front-page news when his wife directed anger at the insurance industry—something that a leader in her position should do, if she is to serve her constituency well.

I do not believe that the "different voice" concerns lie deep in women; granted permission to do so without punishment, as many women as men would write blustery, cantankerous prose and flock to the delights of public argument. Women do not lack the desire or ability to fight hard or write fiercely; we lack a behavioral paradigm that makes doing so acceptable.

When a woman does engage in public debate, she is often torn in two. She may be anguished by her own sense that her strong voice is in a state of conflict with her longing for approval and her discomfort with conflict. I feel this role conflict often myself: in a recent book, I argued hard with a certain writer's ideas; when I subsequently met her and liked her, I wanted to beg forgiveness—even though my views of her work had not changed. I feel a kind of terror when I am critical in public and experience a kind of nausea when I am attacked. The knowledge that another person and I publicly disagree makes me feel that I have left something unresolved, raw in the world; even if I "win"—especially if I win—I also lose, because I am guilty, in traditionally feminine terms, of a failure to create harmony and consensus; this bruise to identity manifests at the level of my sense of femininity.

Now I know that this anxiety is unhelpful, even retrograde; and it is directly at odds with my even stronger wish to enjoy the fray without this grief. But there it is. And if I, with my strong feminist upbringing, feel this sense of two drives in a state of absolute conflict when I enter public debate, I doubt that I can be alone. If a woman thinks of herself as someone who is warm and kind in private life, how can she also be a critic in public life, an agonist? This sense of role conflict can feel to many as if it is built in to women's participation in public life.

Women also lack any paradigm for expressing dissent with other women in a way that is perceived as a sign of respect. Men have rituals for expressing conflict as a form of honor, even of friendship; British male parliamentarians are famous for braying at one another and then joking over the urinal. But women lack any such social patterns. If a woman engages in hard debate with another woman, she is a "spoiler" or a "mudslinger," as Liz Holtzman was accused of being when she attacked Ferraro in the 1992 Senate race; the fact that Senator Nancy Kassebaum *disagreed* with Senator Patty Murray about what to do with the Packwood investigation made news. Woman-to-woman argument is seen, even by women, as a breakdown of precious consensus, or a catfight, or a "betrayal of sisterhood"—a situation that can force women in public to suppress their legitimate differences of opinion; whereas man-to-man argument is understood as being the stuff of democracy.

Why is all this "subjective," "emotional" stuff a fit subject for the pages of a policy journal? Because the psychic disincentives for women to argue in public, or to write strong opinionated journalism, have profound implications for the health of democracy. Woolf wrote, "The effect of discouragement upon the mind of the artist should be measured." These psychological and social barriers to women's opinionated public speech make it literally not worth it, in many women's minds, to run for office, contradict an adversary or take a controversial public stance. If many women feel ridicule and hostility more acutely than men do, if they are uncomfortable with isolation, then ridicule, hostility and the threat of isolation can be—and are—standard weapons in the arsenal used to scare women away from public life.

In essence, certain kinds of forceful speech and interchange are defined as male and prohibited to women, as a subtle but immensely effective means to maintain the world of opinion and policy-making as an all-male preserve. And then, in a vicious circle, many women pre-emptively internalize the barriers, which keeps them wary of storming their way into the marketplace of opinions.

The response to this state of affairs has to be a complex one. To begin with, editors and producers must root out their own often unwitting bias. They are welching on their commitment to inform citizens of a real range of views, leaving half the population ill-prepared to pursue their interests within the democratic process. They are also shortchanging us as a nation, for their unacknowledged warp in perspective leaves "women's issues" and female talking heads, no matter how pressing the topic nor how perspicacious the voices, to languish in the journalistic harem of women's magazines, crowded in among celebrity pets and the latest news on the French manicure. Because of this omission of "women's perspectives" and hard facts about women, we endure wildly off-the-mark debate and create faulty policy in a vacuum of information.

Further gender polarization is not the answer. Just as we are learning to integrate "male" and "female" perspectives about sexual harassment as we seek a newer, fairer social contract in the workplace, we must integrate "male" and "female" views and patterns of expression as we renegotiate the contract about what it is appropriate to say, and how it is appropriate to say it, in the forums of opinion.

The last solution to this dilemma, for all of us who are women still ambivalent about waging opinion, is internal: the only way forward is through. We must realize that public debate may starve the receptors for love and approval, but that it stimulates the synapses of self-respect. Let us shed the lingering sense that authority is something that others—male others—bestow upon us; whenever we are inclined to mumble invective into our coffee, let us flood the airwaves instead. Let's steal a right that has heretofore been defined as masculine: the right to be in love with the sound of one's own voice. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Back to Brando

Warner Brothers has re-released **A Streetcar Named Desire**, restoring some footage that had been omitted in 1951 because of censor pressure. I hadn't seen it, on tape or otherwise, since its first showings, so I hastened. I think I spotted the new footage, but much more to the point, I had—thanks yet again to Thomas A. Edison and his fellow inventors—an adventure in time, a chance to bring a piece of 1951 to today. *Streetcar* today looks better, the same and a bit worse.

Tremendous, prime, even better than I remembered, is Marlon Brando's performance as Stanley Kowalski. The role is altered slightly from the original play; still, this is his performance. I had seen it twice in the theater in 1947, and when the film first appeared, I rushed to make sure that it was there. It was; it is.

This wasn't Brando's first screen appearance; he had been in *The Men* (1950) as a disabled war veteran but hadn't had sufficient chance to show his powers. It was *Streetcar* that stamped Brando on the world's mind indelibly. The screenplay, by Tennessee Williams himself, gives Brando a different "entrance" from the play. The play begins with Stanley coming in and tossing a package of meat to his wife. By the time the film was made, Brando had become Brando, and his entrance was delayed. The film opens with Blanche arriving in New Orleans, then finding her sister, Stella, with her husband, Stanley, in a bowling alley near their apartment. Blanche and Stella greet each other while Stanley roughhouses with some men in the distance. We are teased for a moment before the bomb explodes.

Sculptural yet lithe, he irrupts into the film like history taking its revenge. The voice itself is part of that revenge: instead of the round, resonant voice we expect in good actors, this man's voice corkscrews in, incises sideways, then turns into full-bladed flashes of steel. It's a new voice for a new kind of acting. American films, global films, had had plenty of working-class heroes; but here is a man (like Jean Gabin in France) who brings anger with him, anger and genitals. He is furious at the world that has subordinated him. He arrives to change things and to establish a line of change—the hot, hot-tempered "gaudy seed-bearer" (Williams's phrase) whose life can be defined as what he does when he isn't having sex. A basic image of the play is of a wave of latter-day immigration rolling right over domestic Anglo-French gentility; here is that raw new power, rolling tidally.

Vivien Leigh's performance as Blanche Dubois doesn't have equal conviction. Leigh played the role previously on the London stage, directed by Laurence Olivier, and she brings to the screen a real knowledge of Blanche and of the means to realize it. But—perhaps because she played Blanche first for a director quite different from the director of the film, Elia Kazan—she never seems absolutely at ease. She is always working at the part, with great skill and of course with affecting beauty, but she is never tragic: she is always reaching for the pathetic. What's missing is the blank, frenzied evisceration, the cloak of true-false poetry that (as I remember) Jessica Tandy had in the New York production. When Leigh leaves at the end, it's a pathetically deranged woman being taken to a hospital. With Tandy, it was the netting of a butterfly-tarantula, a victim who assisted in her own victimization.

Kim Hunter, Stella in the Broadway cast, is Stella again. Never a compelling actress, Hunter responds keenly to Kazan here, particularly—I think this is restored footage—when she descends to Stanley in the courtyard below. They have fought; she has fled to friends upstairs. Now, part infant and part stud, he bawls for her in the courtyard below; and Hunter, her breasts and loins warm, comes down the stairs to him.

Karl Malden is Mitch, Blanche's reticent suitor, as he was on Broadway. Often through his career Malden has seemed to use his homeliness the way some actors use their good looks; but here he doesn't make an issue of it, he just plays directly.

Kazan, who did that first theater production and had done six films before this one, is now a part of theater-film history in two senses: he made his mark with a signature style, and that style now has a slight whiff of mothballs. The Actors Studio approach—the version of Stanislavsky called The Method—seems so consciously honest, so determinedly anti-traditional, that in today's perspective, it becomes just another tradition.

In film directing, that style transmutes into heaviness. All through the first

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Flight of the Innocent. *Italian. A 10-year-old Calabrian boy, child of kidnappers, gets entangled in the kidnapping of a rich 10-year-old Siennese boy. A bit fancy in treatment but gripping. (Reviewed 11/15/93)* **Gettysburg.** *The three-day battle re-created with fascinating precision. Only the "human" interludes are sometimes soggy. The rest is chilling. (11/8/93)* **It's All True.** *A documentary about the making and unmaking of Orson Welles's documentary of the same name (1941-2). Another sad look at an unfulfilled life. (11/15/93)* **The War Room.** *Documentary. Inside the Clinton presidential campaign, with the personable James Carville and George Stephanopoulos. A touch too enlightening—about forces that shape our lives. But it crackles. (10/22/93)* **—SK**

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sequences in the apartment, the lighting is almost a parody of 1920s German expressionism, with street signs flickering on the faces of people within. Throughout, in that small apartment, Kazan concentrates on actors' movement, rather than on camera movement. Possibly he believes this more "honest" or possibly he wants to re-create theater on film. But often the film looks as if it's being performed in a submarine. And he uses off-screen sounds blatantly, especially the Mexican vendor selling "*flores para los muertos.*"

But the most upsetting element in the film is the screenplay. *Streetcar*, as time has shown, is a masterwork, one of the few great plays written on this side of the Atlantic; and the author of that masterwork, under censorship pressure, was willing to tamper with it significantly. This isn't without precedent. (Ibsen gave *A Doll House* a happy ending for German production. O'Neill altered *Desire Under the Elms*, hoping for a Hollywood sale.) But precedent doesn't really help.

A few scenes are so condensed that they almost sound like synopses, but those aren't the worst matters. Williams made two huge injurious changes. First, Blanche's long speech to Mitch—in which she reveals how she discovered her husband's homosexuality and caused his suicide—is made nonsense. She says that she discovered that her husband was "weak." Not only is the sanitized speech silly, it destroys the complex of sexual relations that leads from the suicide to her promiscuities and on to Stanley, a figure exactly the opposite of her husband.

Second, the ending is changed. Stella punishes Stanley for his rape of Blanche by leaving him. In the play Stella tells a friend that, if she believed Blanche's account of the rape, she couldn't go on living with Stanley. Clearly, for her own reasons, Stella has decided that Blanche's story is a fantasy of the unbalanced. In the film Stella apparently believes Blanche (to underline her story, Kazan has given us a shot of Stanley advancing on Blanche melodramatically), even though there's a quick line later to disavow that the rape ever took place.

The film finishes with Stella's noble, head-high departure. This is not merely a sop to simplistic morality: it contravenes the torrential flow of the work. The play ends with Stella outside, sobbing after Blanche is taken away, and with Stanley going to her and embracing her. "He kneels beside her," says the stage direction, "and his fingers find the opening of her blouse." The play ends in its glandular habitat. The film ends as a tract.

Its re-release, in these greatly shifted times, raises a question: Ought *Streetcar* to be remade more faithfully? (It was redone for T.V. in 1984: I missed it.) Eventually, it will happen, I suppose, and it may be done well, but I can wait. Maimed though Williams's art is, Brando's is monumental. That's enough. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Urban Angst and Its Antidote

Two plays opening off-Broadway in the same week, one American, the other English, are so alike in style and substance that one might think a single synapse had linked the minds of perfect strangers, separated by country and culture. These are not social issue plays, preoccupied, say, with such familiar off-Broadway subjects as AIDS or female bonding. No popular trend can explain away their similarities. Rather, they are unfashionably grim studies of the metaphysical perils of living in the modern city.

Howard Korder's **The Lights** (Lincoln Center Theater at the Mitzi E. Newhouse) and Martin Crimp's **The Treatment** (New York Public Theater) both describe ugly blights on the physical and spiritual landscapes of everyday urban life. The American Korder's city is an unnamed metropolis during an indistinct decade, the Englishman Crimp's is contemporary New York, but their common theme is the corruption of natural humanity in a brutalized environment. The locus classicus for this kind of play is *Woyzeck*, Büchner's harrowing study of a demented antihero under siege; it is Büchner's pulsating images and episodic structure, later echoed in Brecht's feverish early work, that inform Korder's and Crimp's hallucinatory language and nonlinear style. But while each playwright owes a debt to German neo-Romanticism, Korder continues to pay some dues to David Mamet as well. Just

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as Korder's *Boys' Life* was a tribute to *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, so *The Lights* (like his earlier play *Nobody*) covers some of the same terrain as *Edmond*, Mamet's underappreciated Büchnerian study of spiritual disintegration in a world of concrete and steel. While we're at it, let's also credit Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*, since the victims at the center of *The Lights* and *The Treatment* are working-class women.

I apologize for all this academic homework. It's just my awkward way of proposing a cultural context for these plays and saluting their considerable ambition and integrity, while deferring a less than enthusiastic judgment. Korder endows his abstract municipality with a good deal of invention. He names his own streets and squares and shopping malls, and even, in one scene, a group of imaginary movie stars appearing at an imaginary movie premiere. His cityscapes are familiar enough. They feature the usual suspects: muggers, junkies, dealers, deadbeats, bag ladies, street corner preachers, corrupt officials. But although Korder's civic pledge of allegiance ("Nothing matters and everything sucks") could be the motto of any modern metropolis, there is something deeply alien and repellent about this environment. It is a world constructed exclusively of grotesque images (at one moment a woman's greased infant rolls down the street), an illuminated hell that never tolerates the emollient of darkness, even with the lights turned off. No wonder the theater district's long-running escapist play is called *Happy Go Lucky*.

Clearly, the main protagonist of *The Lights* is the city itself, but the play also has a heroine, Lillian, who functions in the plot. Only 26 but already "used up" by "all of this," Lillian works at a jewelry counter and, in a moment of weakness, steals a watch as a present for her deadbeat boyfriend, Fredric. Fredric brutalizes Lillian (and is brutalized in turn by some shady dealers), so she turns for consolation to a gentle civic employee who turns out to be married. When she is charged with theft of the watch, she accuses another man, thus learning that "as long as you're careful, you can do what you want." At the end, Lillian receives a present from her new boyfriend—a little chocolate city. Her girlfriend notes, "You could eat it with two bites," and she replies, "Yes, wouldn't it be nice?"

This underscored exchange is fairly typical of Korder's terse dialogue, a telegraphic series of barks and grunts accompanied, in Mark Wing-Davey's production, by earsplitting dissonant music and raucous sounds. This lighted city has too many detours to provide us with a coherent street map, but in finding a visual means to accommodate the mesh of cinematic episodes, Marina Draghici contributes the most impressive work of the evening, a set constructed of floor grates, radiators and plastic walls. Christopher McCann invests the role of Lillian's married boyfriend with a shy, appealing humanity, and the other performances are serviceable. But the playwright's bleak remorseless style eventually becomes as deadening as the city's lights, as constricting as its concrete canyons, as unbreathable as its air.

The Treatment, which is also punctuated by a deafening sound score, has similar problems, resulting from a similar reluctance to compromise a vision of unredeemable ugliness. When the play opens, a young woman named Anne is being interrogated by an older man, Andrew, and his wife, Jennifer. They could be two detectives questioning a perpetrator, but it soon becomes clear that they are "facilitators" investigating an episode in Anne's life as a premise for a movie treatment. She was attacked by a man in a leather face hood who threatened her with a knife and silenced her cries by putting tape over her mouth. Why these putative producers would be interested in this tacky story is no more comprehensible than why the girl neglects to say that the hooded man was her husband, Simon.

The playwright is clearly less interested in Hollywood treatments than in the mistreatment of New York citizens, and what transpires is the growing degradation of an innocent girl in an increasingly phantasmagoric world. An 8-year-old "Chinese Man" is shot through the face. A cabbie can't find his way to a Central Park West address because he's blind. When asked if he's ever killed anyone, Simon answers, "Hasn't everyone in this city? Either killed or been killed?" When Anne, whose eyes can change color at will, is told she looks different, she replies, "I changed my hotel."

Andrew assigns a washed-up writer named Clifford to write Anne's story, even to witness their lovemaking when he eventually seduces her. Anne retaliates by hiring Simon to put out the voyeur's eyes with a sharpened fork. The producers manage to interest a black movie star in Anne's story; the project goes forward and wins an award. But by this time Anne has lost interest. Andrew discovers her in a hotel room, pregnant, her mouth taped, a leather hood on the floor. When he frees her, she opens the door to escape and is shot by Jennifer. The play ends with the blinded Clifford on the roof of the blind cabbie's taxi, orating wildly as the wind scatters pages from his script into the air.

Thus synopsized, *The Treatment* sounds incoherent, and I'm afraid it is, in form as well as content. Crimp's reality is so alien it doesn't even possess the logic of a dream. No matter how murky and muddled the action, however, the play keeps its hold on you, partly because of a committed production under the strong, if relentless, direction of Marcus Stern. James Schuette's metallic constructivist setting suggests a spatial volume one wouldn't think possible in the restricted Newman Theater. Abetted by Scott Zielinski's imaginative lighting, it creates the illusion of endless city streets and, in one scene, a cavernous subway station simply through forced perspective and a few fluorescent lights. Daniel Von Bargen has moments of great strength and great remorse as Andrew, Randy Danson brings a steely reserve to Jennifer, Angie Phillips is an otherworldly Anne. David Margulies's Clifford is a crumpled soul in a rumpled suit, and Susan Knight plays a number of roles with impressive variety. *The Treatment* is a mess, but it's often more intriguing than a lot of tidier plays.

At one point in *The Treatment* a character, talking about modern art, protests, "I will not pay good money to be told the world is a heap of shit." Audiences might say the same about these postmodern plays. No such objections could be leveled at a new one-person show called **Family Secrets** (Westside Theater), which may explain why it is receiving such wild acclaim. The piece doesn't tell a pretty story; yet it is always life-affirming, celebrating small human victories in the conduct of Jewish family wars.

Written by Sherry Glaser, who enacts all the parts, and Greg Howells, who directs her performance, *Family Secrets* suggests why one-person shows are proving so appealing these days. A primary reason is the refreshingly direct relationship between the actor and the audience. Playing five distinct characters in the same family, beginning as the Father, Glaser appears in a three-piece suit, picking her nose and flicking the detritus on the floor. He tells how his daughter Fern changed her name and her sexual preferences ("You enjoy having sex with a woman," she said, "why shouldn't I?"), then switched back again and had a baby with a Puerto Rican. Patting his vest, shrugging and shambling, the Father transforms instantly into the Mother, with a quick change of clothes, a wig and some rouge, to tell us of the time she spent in a mental institution, presumably driven there by her family ("I tried to make perfect kids but they wouldn't cooperate"). By persuading herself she was the Virgin Mary, she finally became

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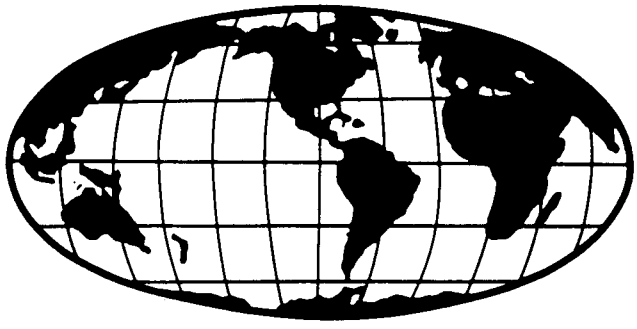

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the perfect mother, and, with the aid of shock treatments, survives her illness and takes up law.

Through an even more miraculous transformation, this high-voiced, strutting lithium lady changes into her lisping daughter, Fern, celebrating the beauties of menstruation—or rather "femstruation" ("I love getting my period, I feel so connected to other women")—before going through an extended and hilarious re-enactment of a painful parturition ("I realize why women die in childbirth—it's preferable"). Glaser next transforms into Fern's sister, Sandra, an adenoidal and bulimic teenager under house arrest for smoking pot. Using her voice like a siren, Sandra describes her crush on the school jock. Asked to give him a blow job, she demurs ("I'd love to but I'm on a diet"), though she has been practicing on a hairbrush.

In the midst of singing "As Time Goes By," she changes into her own grandmother, a palsied jut-jawed octogenarian in a checked pants-suit. Though this cackling ancient can barely move, she recently fell in love again, had an elaborate wedding ceremony (with a band and a gefilte fish swan) and now enjoys an active physical life, including racquetball. Enjoining them to accompany her in singing Jewish songs, she invites the spectators over to her house for Passover.

I'm very tempted to go. Glaser's performances are so zestful, and her anecdotes so appealing, that she manages to redeem us not only from the *tsuris* of family conflict, but also from the shmutz of city living. Alternating sorrow and disappointment with humor and wonder, freshly observed and brilliantly performed, *Family Secrets* offers a splendid antidote to urban angst. •

The Tribe of Idols

By Joe Klein

President Kennedy: Profile of Power
by Richard Reeves
(Simon & Schuster, 765 pp., $30)

RFK: Collected Speeches
edited and introduced by Edwin O. Guthman and C. Richard Allen
(Viking, 480 pp., $25)

The Last Brother: The Rise and Fall of Teddy Kennedy
by Joe McGinniss
(Simon & Schuster, 623 pp., $25)

I met my first Kennedy, and was exposed to the attendant "magic," on a crisp, sunny, mortality-mocking afternoon twenty-four autumns ago. I was a young reporter working my first significant assignment, a day trailing Ted Kennedy through the suburbs north of Boston. I had read about reporters and Kennedys; I was prepared to be seduced. But it was three months after Chappaquiddick. The senator was stiff, funereal, trussed in a back brace, wearing a black suit. His wife Joan was along; they hardly spoke. They marched in a parade in Salem. It seemed a living death, the cruelest of sentences.

At a Greek picnic in Lowell, the senator, still only quasi-sentient, was beset by a fluttering of young pols, aldermen, state senators and the like (including, I think, two young Greeks named Tsongas and Dukakis). They flashed about jauntily, with suit jackets slung over their shoulders, sleeves rolled, ties loosened—all that hair, all those teeth. Trying to look, and speak and move ... like him. Just as Ramblin' Jack Elliot took to aping the shakes and the twitches of Woody Guthrie's Huntington's disease, these fellows affected the halting, back-wrenched, cortisone-stiffness of the Kennedys. They had all the moves: the squint, the shy wave (Bobby's wave, I think), the hand through the hair. And this pantomime, rather than anything the senator did that day, was my first brush with Kennedy "magic."

Unlike Joe McGinniss, I cannot begin to imagine how Ted Kennedy felt about all these people hoping to be taken for his siblings, about their artless optimism and garish ambitions. It may have been excruciating. Or, perhaps, just another day at the office. McGinniss, in his duly eviscerated and quickly forgotten odiography, proclaims the Kennedy aura "the central secular myth of our age." True, no doubt, for certain politicians; a spiritual peer of the Lowell acolytes now resides in the White House. And true, too, for the literary elites, who seem forever in the act of raising and lowering the fallen standard, that most appropriately pointed of Kennedy totems. Such reasonable and estimable sorts as William Manchester and Garry Wills have gone off the deep end, on one side or the other; and for meaner types—the Joe McGinniss-Oliver Stone brigade—the allure of all that sex, violence and money, leavened by a moist, tabloid idealism, is, of course, irresistible.

But is there anything left to be had here for those who are not liberals obsessed with nostalgia or conspiracy, or readers of *The National Enquirer*? Is there anything of interest that *hasn't* been said about these people? If so, the path surely runs through Richard Reeves's scrupulous, honorable and nonhysterical account of the Kennedy presidency. It is Reeves's good fortune to be published only a few months after McGinniss's vagrant musings; his sobriety is bracing. He sets a tone of such measured, carefully sourced austerity that it is possible for him to note that one of the inaugural guests was the actress Angie Dickinson "with whom Kennedy slipped away to private rooms a couple of times during the ceremonies" and not seem leering. His conceit is to confine himself to the substance of the Kennedy presidency; style, myth, magic, wit and wisdom are, for once, secondary concerns.

Reeves says that he wished to see the presidency through its occupant's eyes, a difficult act, especially with an occupant as elusive as John Kennedy, even in a White House as well-documented as that one was. But the conceit often pays off, in ways intended and not. Without the tempered narrative arc of professional biography, the White House comes off as claustrophobic, nerve-wracking, like one of those high-velocity video games, the nature of the threats and their number never quite predictable. Events tumble;

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the operation always seems just a bit out of control. There is the rather remarkable four-day period in June 1963, when Kennedy delivers his famous American University speech, inviting the Russians to join in a nuclear test ban, while George Wallace stands "in the schoolhouse door" at the University of Alabama, pretending to block the matriculation of black students (one of 160 civil rights-related actions that week, Reeves notes), while a Buddhist monk incinerates himself in Vietnam, precipitating the terminal crisis of the Ngo government, while Kennedy waits impatiently for a response to the A.U. speech from Khrushchev, while Robert Kennedy and assorted others try to convince the president that it is time, finally, to propose civil rights legislation. Kennedy proposes the legislation in a moving and elegant televised address ... just after Khrushchev responds favorably ... and a few hours before Medgar Evers is shot in Mississippi.

Reeves doesn't pretend to know how it all would have turned out. Indeed, he is admirably forthright about the mixed signals. His Kennedy is, by turns, competent, puerile, wise, myopic, prudent, cagey and incompetent. There is no clear pattern of "growth." Indeed, the presidency is bracketed by two disastrous episodes, the Bay of Pigs and the assassination of the Ngo brothers in Vietnam. In the end, the president, obsessed by the need to strut a muscular anti-communism, still hasn't figured out which of his advisers to trust, still hasn't been weaned from his adolescent fascination with counterinsurgency types. Nothing has been learned.

John Kennedy is at once something out of Fitzgerald—a charming, careless rich boy—and Norman Mailer's perfect existential president. "He had little ideology," Reeves writes. "And he had less emotion. What he had was an attitude.... Irony was as close as he came to a view of life." He was the first self-selected (or, perhaps more precisely, father-selected) president—his name would have been among the last to emerge from a smoke-filled room—and he was singularly unprepared for the job (as most of his successors have been). His administration was out of control before the transition was over. The Cabinet selection process was chaotic, maladroit and just plain weird: Republicans at the Departments of Defense and Treasury, a stranger at the State Department, his brother at Justice. His staff lacked a central organizing authority. He was the hub of the wheel, but he was uninterested in almost all the spokes save one—foreign policy, where he reckoned himself an expert. His "expertise" exposed in a matter of months in Cuba, he made no significant staff changes, but asked Bobby to get more involved. Strange.

Actually, worse than strange. Kennedy was, most likely, drug-addled throughout: daily injections of cortisone for his Addison's disease, of novocaine (sometimes five or six shots per day) for his back problems, of amphetamines for his spirit. He met with Khrushchev in June of 1961, stoked to the gills on all of the above, and was taken to the cleaners, unable to counter—or to read accurately—the Russian's peasant bluster. He emerged shaken, convinced that Khrushchev was ready to risk nuclear war over Berlin. "He treated me like a little boy," he said. ("Too intelligent and too weak," Khrushchev told an aide.) And yet, a little more than a year later, when the real test came with the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba, Kennedy reacted with subtlety and restraint, a blockade (first proposed by his brother) rather than immediate bombing (favored by Dean Acheson, the most "experienced" of his advisers). And he followed that with his deft, and quickly successful, move toward a nuclear test ban treaty.

Progress? Growth? Not quite. Even as the test ban was being voted in the Senate, Kennedy was allowing plans to go

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forward for a coup in Vietnam. (He changed his mind about this almost daily, a performance reminiscent of Bill Clinton's Bosnia flinch.) "It really is true that foreign affairs is the only important issue for a president to handle, isn't it?" he asked Richard Nixon, of all people. "I mean, who gives a shit if the minimum wage is $1.15 or $1.25, compared to something like Cuba."

Kennedy certainly didn't. He joked about his lack of interest in domestic affairs. He proposed some legislation—Medicare, a Department of Urban Affairs—half-heartedly, but he wasn't surprised, or very distressed, when it was sat upon by ancient Southern committee chairmen. He disdained liberals, called them "honkers." He disdained Congress, refused to court congressmen. He disdained his appointees, holding only two full Cabinet meetings. He disdained his generals, telling aides to "keep them away from me." He was singularly unmoved by the great moral issue of the moment, the civil rights movement. The freedom riders were troublemakers. "Negroes are getting ideas they didn't have before," Kennedy's one black adviser, Louis Martin, tells him as James Meredith attempts to integrate the University of Mississippi. "Where are they getting them from?" the president asks. "From you! You're lifting the horizons of Negroes."

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

This is an extraordinary moment. Suddenly the institutional myopia of the White House lifts and Kennedy is confronted with his presidency as the public sees it—and it becomes quite clear, Reeves's heroic labors notwithstanding, that the enduring significance of this administration has very little to do with the daily run of meetings, the cold war chess match or even the intricacies of the decision-making process during the Cuban missile crisis. It has to do with Kennedy, with the way he looks, moves, speaks and lives. Kennedy's reaction to the adulation is unknowable; he was too cool ever to talk about it, apparently. But he seems constantly surprised, and sometimes even moved (a rare emotion for him), by the size and the passion of the crowds that greet him—as in Berlin, where he tosses aside a sober prepared text and ad libs his "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" speech. When Gallup has him at 83 percent approval (5 percent against) right after the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy says, "Jesus, it's just like Ike. The worse you do, the better they like you."

The public phenomenon of the Kennedy presidency has never been replicated. It may never be. A powerful new medium—television—collided with its first adept practitioner and a vast national innocence at a time of unmatched affluence, confidence and hope. The American people were ready for a little glamour and sophistication. They had endured a Depression, fought an unambiguous war, worked hard and been amply rewarded—with cars and appliances and homes in the suburbs. They were ready for a break, for Hyannis Port and sailing, for all those brothers and sisters and kids and friends, for John Glenn and Rafer Johnson, for Oleg Cassini, Peter Lawford and the rat pack—and especially for Jackie, dressing up, buying antiques, introducing "culture" to the White House, "teaching Americans how to act and spend all the new money coming their way, giving the newly prosperous some polish in a larger world," as Reeves writes. "Watching the Kennedys was self-improvement."

For the children of the newly prosperous—college-educated, self-involved, itching to do something heroic—self-improvement wasn't about couture or Casals. It was about idealism. It was about the Peace Corps and putting a man on the moon—tangential initiatives, mentioned only in passing by Reeves because they took so little of the president's time—and it was about having smart young people (younger than Clinton's crew, by and large) running the country. This brand of Kennedyism, the altruistic, crusading "Ask not ..." idealism, is what has come to define his legacy, albeit in a pureed form, safe for consumption by infants and children. How ironic. Kennedy, no doubt, would have been appalled to be associated with anything so maudlin, so cloying, so self-righteous, so unreflective. Idealists were honkers. They weren't tough-minded. They lacked rigor. (What, one wonders, would have been the president's reaction to the current Senator Kennedy's endless roster of politically correct, overly ambitious and intrusive legislative proposals? Would he laugh or yawn?)

Where on earth did this received Kennedyism—so unlike the man who actually occupied the office—come from? From the stirring words that Theodore Sorenson put into his mouth, for starters. (Although, in fairness, when left to his own devices, as in Berlin, the president could summon the trumpets and the torches as well as any of his ghosts.) Clearly Kennedy saw himself in heroic terms. He considered himself an activist, a warrior—not a soother like the early FDR or a brooding sufferer like Lincoln. He hid his love of golf, for fear that it would remind people of Eisenhower. He was more like Theodore Roosevelt, cocky, untested, interventionist and, above all, young. His youth was crucial to the legacy—as were the good looks, the glamour and the sudden

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death (and a world-class set of hagiographers). But it was the generation that came after, Bill Clinton's generation, that really took charge of the mythology, creating the Kennedy it wanted out of its hopes, its naïveté and its bereavement. It was nursed along this path by the younger American most directly influenced by John F. Kennedy: his brother Robert.

Robert Kennedy's intermittent appearances in Reeves's White House are largely inauspicious. He seems testosterone-addled, very much the former Joe McCarthy terrier. He is overly impressed by the counterinsurgency cowboys. He wants to whack Castro. He taps Martin Luther King's phone. He calls Bayard Rustin, the organizer of the March on Washington, a "black fairy." He seems almost a caricature of his brother, smaller, fiercer, all teeth and hair, hair falling into his eyes, eyes mere squints. His vocal timbre is high-pitched, chipmunky, ridiculous when compared to either of his brothers.

And yet the voice—the things he says, the passion and the eloquence—is remarkable. It has to be in order to escape its imprisonment in the book of speeches edited (as opposed to compiled) by Edwin O. Guthman and C. Richard Allen. This is a celebrity tennis tournament posing as serious work. The authors begin by acknowledging the assistance, among others, of Sheena Easton and "the esteemed designer, Bijan." They move on to remembrances from a demographically correct chorus, including Christopher Dodd, Elie Wiesel, Oscar Arias Sanchez, Chaka Fattah (you remember Chaka Fattah, the Pennsylvania state senator), Peggy Noonan and—inevitably—Anna Quindlen. The speeches, position papers and press conference excerpts that follow are fragmentary, sometimes only a few paragraphs long, linked and often overwhelmed by fatty interstitial explanations.

Why should we trust these people? What have they edited out? It doesn't matter. Robert Kennedy's voice transcends the inadequacies of his idolaters. The received Bobby, of course, is very much in evidence here: the brooding younger brother, devastated by the assassination, who begins to identify with those who are suffering and oppressed, learns to love Greek poetry and to quote it a lot and comes to believe, more deeply than his older brother ever did, in the idealized principles of Kennedyism. He is the first apostle, which gives him unlimited—if often unwitting—power to reinterpret. And so John

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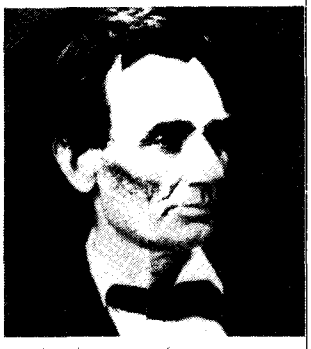

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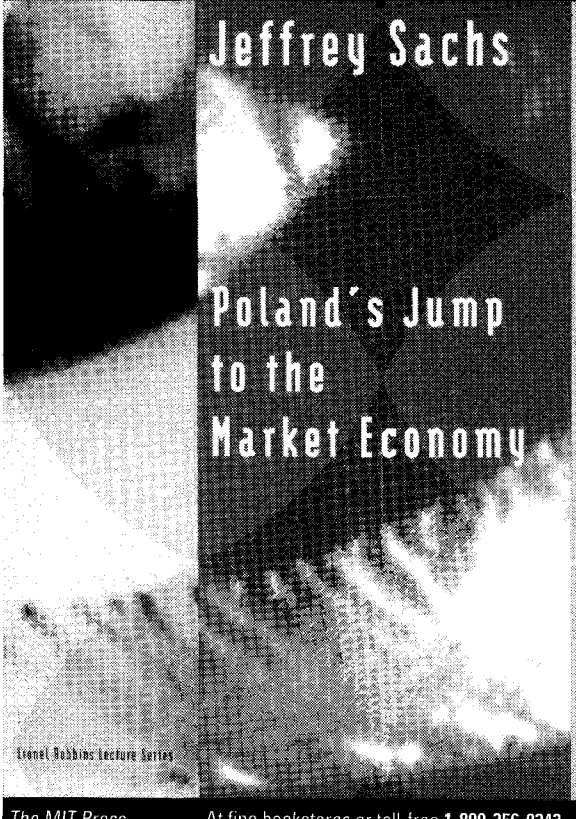

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Kennedy's irony and detachment are slowly subsumed in the Second Revised Edition, as his younger brother summons the president's name in support of a range of issues and movements the president never cared about. On the printed page, at least, Bobby's heat is far more compelling than Jack's cool.

There are some surprises. The first is the intellectual integrity and creativity, the near-total absence of reflexive liberalism. Bobbyism isn't Teddyism. It is a work in progress, an exploration, too raw to have been routinized. Kennedy's speeches on race and urban issues in particular still seem fresh and rigorous. He does succumb to some of the more optimistic fancies of the time, such as a misguided faith in the power of "community development," and an unquestioning belief that merely providing jobs would solve the problems of the slums; but the emphasis is very clearly on self-help and individual responsibility. Government has a moral responsibility to provide equal opportunities, not (*pace* Lani Guinier) equal outcomes. There is no mention of affirmative action or racial preference programs. There is little sympathy for lawbreakers or irresponsible parents, although Kennedy does note, after King's death, that "there is no sure way to suppress men filled with anger who feel they have nothing to lose." In a remarkable series of speeches in early 1966, Kennedy lays out the rudiments of Jack Kemp's "empowerment" theories—welfare reform, enterprise zones, tenant ownership of apartments—and for good measure, throws in the Clintonian notion of offering college scholarships in return for public service.

The second surprise is the eloquence, the unexpected allusions and just plain gorgeous language. Much of this is attributable to Kennedy's close associate and best speechwriter, Adam Walinsky; but Walinsky, now a New York lawyer, insists that the fury and the passion—the moral presence—would have been impossible for any other recent American politician. He may be right. It is hard to imagine a current politician with the literary wherewithal to describe the millions of black men "drifting about our cities ... as if they were of no greater concern to our daily lives than so many sparrows or spent matches." There is also a bluntness not often heard nowadays. In the midst of a devastating attack on the cupidity of the South Vietnamese government, Kennedy says the American military presence there is "like sending a lion to cure jungle rot."

The final surprise is the candor. John Kennedy bought into Hemingway's definition of courage as "grace under pressure," an elegant phrase, but ultimately as elusive as the president. Robert Kennedy wasn't so cagey. His early prosecutorial combativeness—his ruthlessness—mellowed into a stubborn, if intermittent, determination to confront his opponents. There was a messianic tinge to this: Kennedy really seems to have believed that he was the only person able to save the country from Lyndon Johnson in 1968. (Then again, he may have been right.) There was also, undeniably, a rank opportunism to the final crusade. Kennedy waited until Eugene McCarthy gored Johnson in the New Hampshire primary before jumping in.

Once in, however, Kennedy took risks that few others would dare. The night that King was killed, Kennedy defied his advisers—and local officials—and went into the Indianapolis slums where he stood atop a car and gave one of his most memorable speeches, quoting Aeschylus ("In our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart...") and quieting a seething crowd. In his last weeks, he chose to confront even those who should have been his strongest supporters—college students—by going from campus to campus, insisting that military deferments for students "should be abolished." One searches in vain for a more recent example of a major candidate telling key supporters something that might cause them to take their support elsewhere. And when asked, at Idaho State, where he was going to find the money needed for the antipoverty programs he was proposing, Kennedy said: "From you."

John Kennedy's death was a bolt from the blue; but with Bobby, you almost feel it coming—and so, it seems, did he. Had he lived, John Kennedy probably would not have changed much. His sense of detachment was too entrenched, the life of the White House too isolated; he was destined for a charming, stylish senescence. Robert Kennedy was a different story. It has often been remarked that he was cut down in transit, still growing—but toward what end? Those who predict a straight trajectory toward the uninflected, self-indulgent liberalism that followed probably would have been disappointed. His strict Roman Catholicism might have drawn him away from the liberal orthodoxies on social issues such as abortion and homosexuality. His urban policy might have been more Kemp than (Ted) Kennedy. His gut instinct for the sensibilities of ethnic, blue-collar sorts might have led him to unexpected places on racial preferences as well. But who knows? This is a loss that lingers.

One is tempted to say that Ted Kennedy deserves Joe McGinniss, but that would be playing McGinniss's game, finding pop-mythology in the pedestrian. One is tempted to pile on, but, well, haven't we had enough of that already? After all, he must miss his brothers terribly. Their deaths ruined his life. He wasn't cut out for tragedy. He has achieved what passes for stature only through longevity; neither his oratory nor his ideology is very interesting. His personal antics are more so, if only because they exemplify what the historian Fred Siegel has called "liberalism without virtue," the disastrous, post-Bobby tendency of some liberals to ignore or to forgive (and even, for a brief time in the 1970s, to celebrate) morally repugnant behavior. Still, his predicament serves to illuminate the ambitions of his peers, just as it did at the picnic in Lowell where I first met him; only now, it is the president of the United States who is trying to pull the sword from the stone.

Bill Clinton's ambitions can be summarized in three words: "My fellow Americans..." A common enough political usage, to be sure. But for Americans of a certain age, it is a phrase that was patented by—and may well be the personal property of—John F. Kennedy: "And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you..." So it was not insignificant that when Bill Clinton, newly elected last November 3, emerged from the Old State House in Little Rock, the first words he uttered—to a roar—were "My fellow Americans..." followed by a deep, satisfying pause. It was an announcement of restoration.

But what is it about Kennedyism that Clinton hopes to restore? When galley proofs of the Reeves book found their way to the White House a few months ago, eager presidential aides devoured it and inevitably concluded, "God, he's just like that." And yes, there are some similarities. Like Kennedy, Clinton is a master of leaving the impression that he agrees with you. Like Kennedy, he has created a disorganized and chaotic staff structure, has a predilection for long, inconclusive, seminarlike policy meetings, and has trouble making up his mind. Beyond that, though, it is hard to imagine two more dissimilar people. Clinton is defiantly unironic; he is anything but detached; he seems to care little for foreign policy; he is far more concerned about the daily lives of average Americans than Kennedy ever was. Indeed, his strongest public moments,

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such as his recent health care speech, inevitably involve stories about the hard times of people whom he has met, and about how his programs might help them. John Kennedy would find such relentless huggy-weepy emotionalism gagging, and Clinton a mortal honker. Robert Kennedy might be more sympathetic, but he would be perplexed by the president's quickness to compromise, by his utter unwillingness, even under the most extreme provocation, to piss people off. (Bobby might have proved a disastrous executive, given his combativeness.)

In fact, Clinton betrays more than a touch of Teddyism, especially in his obeisance to each and every one of the Democrats' myriad hyphenated special interest tribes, and in his willingness to disable his administration through a quota-driven personnel system. He also shows an undue, Teddyesque respect for the legislature. His feeble pleadings with recalcitrant members of Congress, especially Democrats (Nunn, Gephardt, Bonior, Boren and on and on) have been an embarrassment. Clinton seems, at times, to labor under the bizarre misconception that his place in history will be determined by the bills that he passes. It won't be. Few presidents are remembered for their legislation. Most who succeed do so by leading the nation through a difficult time; occasionally one will come along who nudges the public toward a greater awareness of challenges to come.

John Kennedy may have been embarked on the latter path. He seemed, in his style and his rhetoric, to be leading the nation in a more cosmopolitan direction, deeper into a suddenly intimate and interdependent global society—the real "New Frontier." The immediate challenge was communism, which he believed had to be confronted even on the margins of the Third World, even in space. But there was another, more subtle challenge implicit in the Kennedy message: to abandon the last vestiges of intellectual and economic parochialism, to become more sophisticated. This latter call to self-improvement, to greater involvement in the world, was what inspired an eager, teenaged sax-player in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and many fine young minds of his generation. I suspect that it is the aspect of Kennedyism Clinton is most anxious to restore.

But he leads a different country. John Kennedy's America was at the peak of its power and its confidence; Bill Clinton's America is still powerful, but less confident. It is a more cynical place, less susceptible to trumpets, too frightened

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about its economic future to be very idealistic. Clinton saw this throughout the 1992 presidential campaign—people seemed to burst into tears almost daily in his presence, talking about their lives—and he responded in a most un-Kennedylike fashion: he listened. He let them talk. His empathy struck a chord. His appeal wasn't charisma, it was therapy. He promised a twelve-step presidency.

This is the aspect of Clintonism easiest to mock (a bit too easy, I think—he should get some credit for being that rarest of politicians, one who actually likes people), but it does raise some rather troubling questions. At a time when the traditional American desire for "self-improvement" has been supplanted by a futile quest for "self-esteem," what constitutes leadership? Is it overweening empathy, the president as national group "facilitator"? Or is something more rigorous required? Clinton's challenge is similar to John Kennedy's, but it is tougher: he must coax the public to a new level of awareness, beyond the gathering, self-indulgent—and largely unwarranted—national unease. To do so, he will have to be less understanding and more inspiring. He will have to stop listening so hard and begin to lead.

JOE KLEIN is a *Newsweek* columnist and a CBS news analyst.

Brothers and Others

BY DENIS DONOGHUE

Children of the Earth: Literature, Politics and Nationhood by Marc Shell

(Oxford University Press, 353 pp., $35)

Marc Shell's book is supposedly a study of kinship, but I think he has something else in his sights. He found the title for the book in *Hamlet*. When Hamlet asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "Good lads, how do you both?" Rosencrantz answers: "As the indifferent children of the earth." "Indifferent" here is usually taken to mean ordinary, undifferentiated.

Shell has one idea. It is this: Christianity is bad, Judaism and Islam are good. Christianity is bad because it is "universalist," Judaism and Islam are good because they are "particularist."

> Universalist ideology, we have seen, overtly posits that there is essentially only one human family in the world. For believers in such a religion, "All human beings are my siblings and only animals are others." But the rhetoric of universalism invites us to wonder whether only our kin are our kind even as it recalls the languages of primitive tribes where the word for "human being" and the word for "fellow tribesperson" are one and the same. For the universalist statement turns out easily to mean "any creature who is not my brother is not human" or "only my brothers are human, all others are animals"—a conclusion with catastrophic moral consequences. Particularist ideology, on the other hand, rules this politically dangerous slide out of order by holding that there is more than one brotherhood or tribe of human beings. For particularists there are human brothers, and also others who are not, on account of their otherness, less than human. While the universalist insists that all aliens are animals (he cannot admit the existence of others who are human), the particularist allows "us" to think of and treat some beings from outside our tribe as human rather than as animals.

"Some," but what happens to the others? The weasel phrase "turns out easily" enables Shell to present a negation of universalism as the real character of universalism. I disagree with his illogic. If I posit that all human beings are members of one family, then it is absurd (and sinful) to say that any creature who is not my brother is not human. The crimes committed in the name of Christianity were—and are—outrages against the Christian faith, not exemplifications of its true character. The Inquisition was not the embodiment of Christianity, it was its perversion.

Shell takes as his chief instance of "catastrophic moral consequences" the history of Spain in the fifteenth century. For hundreds of years, he says, Muslim Spain was the most tolerant country in Europe. Christians, Muslims and Jews lived there "more or less peacefully." The reason was that Islamic doctrine "distinguishes first between Muslim and non-Muslim peoples and second between those non-Muslims who are, like Muslims themselves, 'peoples of the Book' (i.e., Christians and Jews) and those non-Muslims who are 'pagan.'" These distinctions, he says, "taken together, could amount to the difference between life and death." For example:

> Muslim courts ruled on the basis of the Koran that those "others" who were "peoples of the Book" could not legally be put to the sword for refusing to convert to Islam while those "others" who were pagan could be.

This happy situation—happy unless you were pagan—came to an end with the conquest of Spain by Christians, "for just as the Islamic division of humankind into particular groups encouraged a limited *convivencia*, the Christian union of all humankind into a single brotherhood encouraged a certain intolerance." Why?

> In one version of the categorizing process I have outlined, the crucial Christian doctrine "All men are brothers"—or "All human beings are siblings"—sometimes turned all too easily into the doctrine "Only my 'brothers' are men, all 'others' are animals and may as well be treated as such."

Shell likes his idea so much that he keeps repeating it; what he says seven times is supposedly true. More important, here the word "doctrine" is loosely used. If "all men are brothers" is a crucial Christian doctrine, what it "sometimes turned all too easily into" cannot also be a Christian doctrine.

According to Shell, "the prime Christian stance is that Christianity itself is a universalist religion and Judaism a particularist religion." He qualifies this by saying that the Christian "representation of Christianity and of Judaism" is "possibly inaccurate," but he ignores the qualification as soon as he has recognized it, and for the rest of the book he takes the interpretation as true. For Christians, he says, "the quintessential alien ... is the Jew." Christendom has sought to define itself "against the Jewish particularist doctrine of love." It follows that Shell refers to "the brutally inhumane reality of the doctrine of universal (human) brotherhood." The promise of universal love, he claims yet again, "turns all too easily into the individual and fatal fraternity of Cain and Abel." Presumably those gentlemen were Christians.

Shell's idea has been around him for a long time. I first saw them together in an essay, "The Wether and the Ewe: Verbal Usury in *The Merchant of Venice*," a chapter of his *Money, Language and Thought*, which appeared in 1982:

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> For a Christian, such as we suppose Antonio to be, a brother is supposed to be any descendant of Adam and not, as for a Jew, a descendant of Jacob. For a Christian there is no need to know a man's individual genealogy to determine whether he is a brother. Yet the customs and laws of the white, Christian Venetians and the practice of Belmont discriminate against others in more extreme ways than does Shylock's distinction between human brothers and others who are human. Shylock does treat Antonio as if he were from a group of human beings other than his own Jewish one, but Antonio treats Shylock as if he were from a species of animal other than the human one (a dog). Not to be a Jewish brother is to be less alien to a Jew than not to be a brother is to a Christian. . . . Antonio may be one of those people who, if he should say "All men are my brothers," might well mean "Only my brothers are men, all others are animals," or even "Citizens of Italian states (Venice and Belmont) are human, but citizens of other states (Morocco, Turkey and, if there were such a place, Jewdom) are animals."

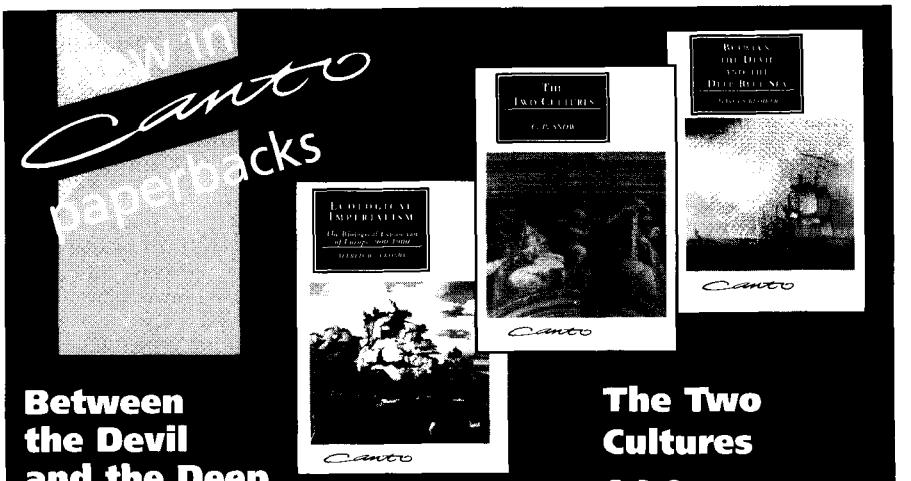
The new book sets this idea loose upon improbable objects: bullfighting, the nurturing of pets, "Beauty and the Beast," Siamese twins, bilingual Quebec, *Hamlet*, an English translation of Marguerite de Valois's *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* by the future Queen Elizabeth when she was 11 years old, Racine's "Britannicus" and Rousseau's reasons for abandoning his illegitimate children. These topics have nothing in common, except that Shell has chosen to enforce his one idea upon them. He has also amplified his chapter on Elizabeth's translation into a separate book, *Elizabeth's Glass* (1993), where it gains the merit of local coherence. By comparison with *Elizabeth's Glass*, *Children of the Earth* is a hodge-podge.

Not surprisingly, Shell has to exert a lot of force to make the materials of *Children of the Earth* illustrate his idea. Thus he says of *Hamlet*:

> King Claudius's command to young Hamlet—"Think of us as of a father"—makes Claudius, to all intents and purposes, Hamlet's biological genitor no less than Old Hamlet is Young Hamlet's father.

I read that sentence "as 'twere with a defeated joy" and wish that Shell had written not "to all intents and purposes," but rather "to my sole intent and purpose." Claudius's sentence is *not* a command:

> We pray you throw to earth
> This unprevailing woe, and think of us
> As of a father; for let the world take note
> You are the most immediate to our throne,
> And with no less nobility of love
> Than that which dearest father bears his son



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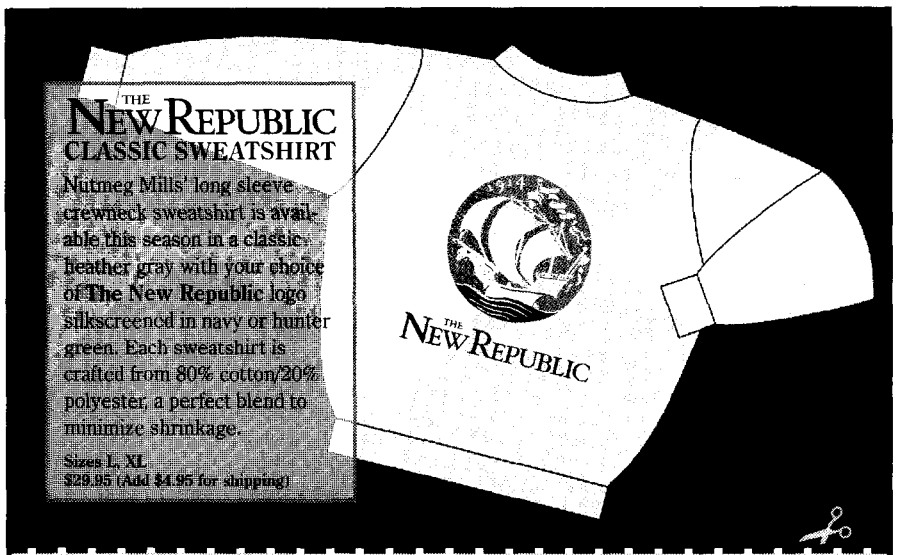
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Do I impart toward you.

"As of a father" means "of course I recognize that I am not your father, but please stop moping and try to treat me as if I were." Later Shell directs readers to *Hamlet* 2.ii.256 for "the view that in *Hamlet* there is no one either kin or non-kin but thinking makes him so." I take this as a joke, since 2.ii.256 has Hamlet telling Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so."

Shell's thinking makes very odd things so. On keeping domestic pets, for instance:

> Pet love thus toes the line between chaste, or socially sanctioned attraction (between a human being and a being from inside his species and outside his family), and either bestial attraction (between a human being and an "animal" being from outside humankind) or incestuous attraction (between a human being and a being from inside the particular kinship family). Or, as I am suggesting, whether we look at it from the viewpoint of the individual or of society, the institution of pethood allows us to toe the line between chaste attraction and both bestiality and incest, taken together.

Fortunately for my soul, apparently, I don't keep a pet.

I wish I could report that *Children of the Earth* is at least a delight to read, but it isn't that, either. Something dire has happened to Shell's style. *The Economy of Literature* (1978) and *Money, Language and Thought* were well enough written, but the new book has sentences so flat that I wonder whether there are misprints at large: "Bilingual advertisement turns our attention toward a word or object in two languages at once." No, that has to be what he determined to say. But what about this?

> How the various peoples of Spain defined and treated one another critically influenced modern European Christendom's understanding of caste and race. And Spain at the time of the reconquest came to serve as a model for how the doctrine that "All human beings are siblings," in its merging of the usual distinction between the human species and the family, negates concepts, like "people of the Book," which mediates kind and kins and thus affect the politically sensitive definition of "nation."

Shell could make a sentence of that, though not a good one, by changing "mediates" to "mediate."

Shell's conclusions, given the nature of the arguments that purportedly lead to them, might just as easily have been stated in the first chapter:

> In the 1990s, half a century after two world wars, the veneration accorded to universalism is as disturbing in its political implications as the particularist nationalism that universalism pretends to eschew but actually merely defines by polar opposition.

More specifically:

> The dehumanizing universalism that congratulates itself—sometimes sincerely, sometimes not—on its own humane intentions even as it conceals a parochial and imperialist particularism comes to despise and to persecute the more realizably tolerant possibilities of openly particularist brotherhoods. Exemplary among these brotherhoods would be the politically disempowered bipartite particularism of Judaism—which distinguishes in good faith between brother Jews and those others who are both nonbrother and human—and the empowered tripartite particularism of Islamic Spain.

"Tolerant particularism" is Shell's formula for "a civilized existence." I hope that he is more devoted to the adjective than to the noun. Favoring tolerance, he presumably thinks it has a better chance of prevailing if it qualifies particularism rather than universalism. I cannot see why particularism is to be preferred to universalism. Each of them is liable to "turn out easily into" persecution. Each of them has. But I have no quarrel with universalism, as long as it is true to its name.

As a minor instance of tolerant particularism, I assume, Shell has called the first chapter of *Children of the Earth* "The Judgment of Solomon; or, An American Introduction to the Study of Brothers and Others." He himself is, or was, a Canadian.

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High Style

BY J. D. MCCLATCHY

Libretti and Other Dramatic Writings, 1939–1973 by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman edited by Edward Mendelson

(Princeton University Press, 758 pp., $49)

Words may come first when an opera is to be composed, but they are usually the last thing to be heard. Anyone's experience will confirm this. Mine, for instance. The first opera I attended happened to be at the most exquisite theater in the world, Venice's La Fenice. I was in the third row, in an armchair upholstered in watered silk. I was young enough to presume that everyone spoke English, so I turned to the man sitting next to me and asked him what the title of the opera meant: *La Traviata.* He looked a little puzzled, and whispered in my ear, "the fallen woman." I was also young enough not to have the faintest idea what that phrase meant, either.

Then the curtain went up. Perhaps it was my very innocence that thrilled to the performance: its grown-up glamour, its passion, a drama that played out on stage what was going on in the heart. From that moment on, opera has always seemed to me the ideal representation of the emotional life. But what first overwhelmed me that night was the spectacle—champagne poured from a balcony into glasses below, the swirling ball gowns, a letter being written with a feather, gold coins thrown at a woman in contempt, the same woman on her deathbed, clutching her throat for breath.

My second opera, a few months later, was *Die Walküre* in Philadelphia. I remember it in part for what I could *not* see; the Magic Fire's "smoke" in Act III drifted so thickly into the auditorium that the audience fled, choking, before the end. All but me. From my bench seat up in the amphitheater, I kept watch over Brünnhilde's sleeping body. Like her, I had been transfixed by Wagner's music.

On neither occasion did I have the slightest idea what was being "said," though the singing all made sense. The music, the spectacle, the drama of both working together to sweep us through the melodrama of our own emotions—these, too, must have been what Auden had in mind when he claimed that opera is "the last refuge of the High style." He was referring primarily, of course, to the grand manner of librettoese, its outsize and exposed expressions of feeling, the high-flown excesses of its tone, the often

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absurd bombast and improbabilities. The modern poet who tried *that* in a book, he noted, would only embarrass, like a man wearing a wig or elevator shoes. But no doubt Auden, the most virtuosic and searching of all the modern poets, was drawn to the language of opera because it was another (and unlikely) singing robe to try on. And wasn't it just like Auden to be attracted to a style precisely because it represented everything opposed to the dry, witty, rational, endlessly subtle voice that we hear in his own later poems?

Auden's celebration of opera has always seemed to me a little hedged around by uneasiness and contradiction. On the one hand, he held that opera "is about *willful* feeling. There could be no opera if we did not, in addition to simply having emotions, insist upon having them at whatever inconvenience to ourselves and others." What Don Giovanni, Norma, Brünnhilde, Lucia and Isolde all have in common is "a passionate and willful state of being." "Passive characters cannot sing," he added, forgetting the likes of Desdemona or Wozzeck. Opera is the apotheosis of the romantic personality, an extravagance of unreason, thrillingly anarchic, at once spellbinding and subversive. "Every high C accurately struck," he said, "utterly demolishes the theory that we are the irresponsible puppets of fate or chance."

On the other hand, he took what seems to me an excessively narrow view of the very premise of opera's conventions. The situations, the characters and the language of opera had to justify themselves as appropriate to singing. Only emotions intense enough to warrant a character's bursting into song—love, rage, grief, joy—would do. There is an oddly stiff literalism to this formulation that I don't imagine he would have applied to, say, the drama. But the drama engaged Auden's playful, not his willful side, and his conflicting attitudes toward opera are of a piece with his lifelong desire both to indulge and to censor the romantic underside of his literary sensibility.

Auden once told an interviewer that his early plays "seem to me now to be libretti *manqués*." In fact, his first libretto now seems more dramatic than operatic. In 1939, soon after they had both arrived in New York, Benjamin Britten asked Auden to concoct a libretto for him, and Auden suggested Paul Bunyan as its subject. For a decade already, Britten and Auden had been collaborating on films and radio scripts, cabaret and art songs, and Britten had provided incidental music for two of Auden's plays, *The Ascent of F6* and *On the Frontier*. Their resulting operetta, *Paul Bunyan*, premiered at Columbia University in May 1941, is an Englishman's take on American themes. Virgil Thomson, in his review of the evening, called the libretto "flaccid and spineless," but that is unfair. It is a witty piece of writing.

It is not, however, a libretto. It falls somewhere between a high camp masque and a backwoods panto. Auden conceived of his task as animating a native American myth. But, like Johnny Appleseed, Paul Bunyan is a figure from folklore, not myth, and has no psychological depth. Auden's treatment breaks down into set pieces; the best of them are indistinguishable from Auden's oblique lyric poems of a slightly earlier period:

O ride, ride till a mountain
  Get up like a woman's thigh.
Or a lake corner the image
  From which you must not fly;
O ride till the woods or houses
  Provide the narrow place
Where you can force your fate to turn
  And meet you face to face.

Britten's final word on the experience

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was "I feel that I have learned lots about what not to write for the theater." Britten's biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, thinks that "the most obvious lesson he learned from it was not to be dominated by his librettist." Twenty-two years later, when word of Auden's death reached Britten, he wept. (His friend Donald Mitchell said that "it was the only time I'd ever seen Ben weep.") They may as well have been tears for lost opportunities. "Auden is in all my operas," he once lamented, but Britten never worked with Auden again after *Paul Bunyan*. His own prickly personality must have resented Auden's self-assured cleverness; there is no doubt he considered Auden a bully in their collaborations. Auden went on to greater work, and in one luminous instance went on to work with a much greater composer, but Britten put his finger on a problem with all of Auden's work in opera: his tendency to dominate, to overwrite, to explain, to make every motive explicit. I have heard it claimed that Auden is the greatest librettist of the twentieth century. I would reserve that niche for Hugo von Hofmannsthal, not least because he knew enough to trust the music to reveal more than words could.

In his recently published memoir, *A Different Person*, James Merrill recalls being at the world premiere of *The Rake's Progress* in Venice on September 11, 1951—the score enchanting him at once "as much for its angelic surprise and invention as for its diabolical way with pastiche." "We sat through the remaining acts," he writes with only a pinch of irony, "in a glow of self-congratulation. From this pinnacle the rest of the twentieth century would be all downhill."

Four years earlier, through his publisher, Stravinsky had put out a feeler to Auden about a libretto based on the Hogarth engravings that the composer had recently seen at the Art Institute of Chicago. Auden agreed at once, and as he wrote in his acceptance letter to the composer, "I hardly need say that the chance of working with you is the greatest honor of my life." In a BBC interview in 1965, Stravinsky reminisced:

> I chose Wystan Auden ... because of his special gift for versification.... What I required was a versifier with whom I could collaborate in writing songs, an unusual starting point for an opera, I hardly need add, as most composers begin with a search for qualities of dramatic construction and dramatic sensation. I had no knowledge of Wystan's dramatic gifts, or even whether he was sensible to operatic stagecraft. I simply gave all priority to verse, hoping that we could evolve the theatrical form together and that it would inspire Wystan to dramatic poetry.

They began evolving—or as Stravinsky would say, "blueprinting"—that theatrical form in meetings at the composer's Los Angeles home in November 1947. Reproduced in this new edition of Auden's libretti is the fascinating scenario that the two produced in those sessions. None of Auden's original ideas for the opera's format survives in this scenario, and the fact that a good deal of the scenario is written in French leads one to suspect that Stravinsky himself took the upper hand in shaping things, no doubt with the sequence of musical numbers foremost in mind. Stravinsky wanted to write a Mozartian opera, an *opéra giocosa* in the manner of *Don Giovanni*, but Hogarth's paintings have none of the elegance, the menace or the pathos of da Ponte's character. Auden may have had his own doubts about his dramatic instincts or his grasp of operatic tradition. In any case, by the time Auden had returned home and written Act I, he sent with it news that initially annoyed the composer: there would be a co-librettist, Chester Kallman.

Courtesy *Opera News*

W.H. AUDEN AND CHESTER KALLMAN (1953)

It is impossible to know Auden's reasons for bringing Kallman aboard, but it would be ingenuous not to speculate. Auden's first operatic experience was at age 8, when his mother taught him the words of the love potion scene from *Tristan and Isolde*, and they would sing it together at the piano, Auden taking Isolde's part. A nodding acquaintance and vague respect aside, that was about as close to opera as he got until he met Kallman in 1939. It was Kallman, in the first flush of their infatuation with one another, who introduced Auden in nights spent at the Metropolitan or in front of the phonograph to the genius of Wagner, Mozart, Verdi, Donizetti and Bellini.

A decade later, faced with Stravinsky's challenge, Auden turned to the person with a superior understanding of operatic conventions and timing. It is no accident that when a reader troubles to unstitch their seamless work, and holds Auden's and Kallman's separate contributions up to the same light, he will often notice that Auden's are the most clever bits and Kallman's are the heartfelt or dramatically moving bits. In Act I of *The Rake*, for instance, it is Kallman who wrote the scene in which Nick Shadow appears and seduces Tom; and Kallman who wrote the simple but riveting aria for Anne Truelove, "I go to him," a moment in the opera as stirring as (because derived from) any Verdian heroine's *scena*.

Auden may have turned to Kallman also for more private reasons. Their life together by 1947 was domestic rather than sexual, and their collaboration afforded an intimacy more intense and gratifying than the dinner table. And though it often puzzled outsiders, who could only share Auden's occasional exasperation with Kallman's profligate ways, the elder poet felt an abiding love for, and pride in, the younger man's gifts. To encourage those gifts, and to create some parity in their relationship, Auden may have wanted to involve him in a project for which he alone had been commissioned—a project that was not just poetry, or merely theater, but something that brought together and made

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indistinguishable the experience and the talent of both of them.

Though it was still Auden's reputation that drew other composers to offer commissions, Kallman did the lion's share of the work. In 1952, a year after the premiere of *The Rake's Progress*, they completed another libretto for Stravinsky, called *Delia, or A Masque of Night*, suggested by George Peele's play, *The Old Wives' Tale*. The result is a Jonsonian masque with characters and a plot that echo *The Magic Flute*. But Stravinsky was done with Mozart, and decided against the new venture. (He turned instead to Dylan Thomas, who had sold him on the idea of a libretto about the rediscovery of Earth after an atomic disaster. For better or worse, Thomas died before the project got going.)

About the same time, they became friendly with their neighbor in Italy, the German composer Hans Werner Henze, and in 1959 Henze asked them for a libretto. The result was *Elegy for Young Lovers*, dedicated to, and derived from, the spirit of Hofmannsthal. During rehearsals at Glyndebourne for their *Elegy*, Auden proposed to Henze a new opera based on *The Bacchae*; Henze agreed, and by October 1963 Auden and Kallman had completed their libretto for *The Bassarids*. In 1969 they adapted *Love's Labour's Lost* for Nicholas Nabokov. And two days before he died in 1973, Auden mailed off the text that he and Kallman had devised for an antimasque titled *The Entertainment of the Senses* to the English composer John Gardner.

For all of these projects, Kallman wrote more than half of the text. In addition to being Auden's operatic muse, Kallman was also chief architect of their libretti. It almost seems fair to reverse their names on the title page of this book—until one realizes that it hardly matters, and that the coincidentally alphabetical listing is right. If Auden was the head, then Kallman was the heart. If Auden was focused on what the artist wanted to do, Kallman kept remembering what the audience wanted done. Together they made an ideal team.

But this book is more than just libretti. As its editor Edward Mendelson suggests, it completes rather than complements *Plays, 1928-1938*, the first volume of the complete edition of Auden's work, which was published in 1988. As always, one is astonished by Auden's prodigal energies. Included in this new volume are: two radio plays; two film narratives; his liturgical drama *The Play of Daniel*; the translation that he did with Bertolt Brecht of *The Duchess of Malfi*; the lyrics commissioned by the Broadway producers of *Man of La Mancha* (heavy-handed; it is no wonder they turned elsewhere for their appropriately impossible dreams of schlock); the scenario of an unwritten libretto, *On the Way*, an exploration of the romantic sensibility that takes caricatures of Berlioz, Mendelssohn and Rossini and sets them amidst comic intrigues at an alpine inn—a sort of *Tales of Hoffmann* in which they once hoped to interest Stravinsky as the second of a matched pair (to go with *The Rake*'s anatomy of the classical sensibility).

Perhaps the most interesting item is the adaptation that Auden made with Kallman in 1955 of *The Magic Flute*, in English for broadcast on NBC's "Opera Theater." What is especially curious is to see Auden, whose essays celebrate the absurdities of opera plots, set about rearranging the scenes of Act II (ignoring the sequence of key signatures) in an effort to rationalize Schikaneder's original and wayward characterizations. The editor has also appended, in anticipation of a future volume of Auden's translations, an account of other dramatic productions that the poet worked on, including works by Brecht, Cocteau, Ernst Toller, Erika Mann and a version of *Don Giovanni*. One final witty flourish is an account of projects that Auden did not undertake, that he entertained and abandoned. These range from a translation of Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* to (this one goes right to the top of my own wish list) a screenplay of the *Odyssey* to be co-directed by G.W. Pabst and Ingmar Bergman.

Still, the libretti are rightly the focus of the book. *The Rake's Progress* remains their masterpiece. Simplest verse is the hardest to write, because it is most exposed, and Auden's spare style here achieves both elegance and speechliness—as in Tom Rakewell's first aria:

> Since it is not by merit
> We rise or we fall,
> But the favor of Fortune
> That governs us all,
> Why should I labor
> For what in the end
> She will give me for nothing
> If she be my friend?

In the short lines here the rhythms are strong, the important words highlighted. He can achieve subtle effects with other means too, as when a duet for the lovers embodies their entwined feelings in syncopated lines for each that rhyme alternately with the other's:

> ANNE: Farewell for now, my heart
> Is with you when you go,
> However you may fare.
> TOM: Wherever, when apart,
> I may be, I shall know
> That you are with me there.

Any librettist's lines, Auden said, are as expendable as infantry to a Chinese general, and are finally to be judged a success or a failure by their ability to

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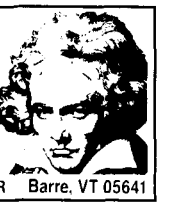

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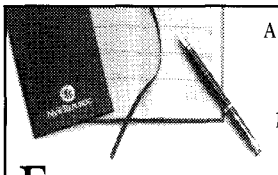

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excite the composer's musical imagination. Obviously Stravinsky's was excited to a dramatic poise and depth that resulted in one of the very few twentieth-century operas to have entered the permanent repertory. But the libretto of *The Rake's Progress*, unlike most others, can easily be read on its own both as the brilliant pastiche of a crisply engraved eighteenth-century moral fable and as a criticism of liberal ideals that have driven Western man from the Enlightenment to socialism. The devil (whose name, Nick Shadow, reveals him to be an aspect of Tom himself—let's call it his imagination) gives Tom three wishes, and Tom's desires are for wealth, for freedom and for control. That last one, in the guise of a machine to turn stones into bread and feed the masses, has Tom spouting: "Thanks to this excellent device / Man shall re-enter Paradise." But paradise remains lost, his desires turn to ashes. In the final scene, set in Bedlam, the ruined, deranged Tom's last two illusions—in a scene that won't allow the wanted tear because it has us wincing—are of what each of us as romantics would least like to give up on: first, art itself; and at the very end, love. Nothing can save us from ourselves.

If the other libretti cannot equal *The Rake's Progress*, two of them at least have been undeservedly overlooked. I have never seen or heard the opera, and I presume that the inferior quality of Nicholas Nabokov's music is the reason why, but the libretto adapted from *Love's Labour's Lost* is a gem. Shakespeare's encrusted wordplay has been stripped back to an altogether light and charming wit. It seems, on the page at least, a perfect comic opera made of all the delicious conflicts involved in love's full hearts and empty words.

I should be able to work up more enthusiasm for *Elegy for Young Lovers*, their ambivalent tribute to Hugo von Hofmannsthal (to whom the Henze opera is dedicated, but whom Auden referred to as "Huff-and-Puff"). Meant as an unsparing portrait of the "artist-genius" (modeled, it would seem, on Yeats), it seems stiff when it wants to be exalted, forced when it should be surprising.

A much better opera is Henze's *The Bassarids*. When he finished typing the final draft, Auden wrote, in a letter to Lincoln Kirstein, that "at the moment I think it is the best libretto we have done so far.... It's a real shocker." He was right. *The Bassarids* is by far the most wrenchingly powerful libretto Auden and Kallman produced, however much that power is derived from Euripides. The chaste, abstemious Pentheus here is the opposite of the sensual Tom Rakewell, but both characters come to the same end: one loses his head, the other loses his mind.

Auden and Kallman flesh out Euripides's story, the better to heighten the impact of this most mysterious and cruel of stories. The verse is fluid, rushing the action along. Here is Pentheus, tearing away his clothes just before he is murdered by his unwitting mother and the maenads:

> I looked into eyes that were my own.
> A full red mouth was rounded on my music.
> It slavered like a bull's.
> I was a faceless God
> And worshiped Pentheus.

A Shadow of a Great Rock in a Weary Land

title of a drawing by Thomas Cole

Let him who is without light
Among you cast the first
Shadow, and let the worst
Among us here at our late

Hour now speak for the best:
There is nothing higher above
Our heads, and we whimper of
What once had been our boast.

When among all possessions
Knowledge, alone, is un-
Acknowledged to be one
Of our treasures or our passions.

Failing of wont and of will,
All we construct or construe
In neither sense holds true:
What can we still do well?

Bewail with an outraged heart
Infringements upon what
Is our Divine Right Not
To Have Our Feelings Hurt?

Not even that—the airs
And choruses of complaint
Are poorly intoned, and faint:
They fall on our own deaf ears.

Tell over the old tales
Of the hope from which we grew,
And our fading claims to be new
Now as some curfew tolls?

Not even that—in fear
Of singularity
Blockhead and airhead flee
Transports of metaphor.

Remember what we once were,
Even if too late to learn
How our fattening unconcern
Fed in the troughs of war?

Not even that—our boughs
Broke too soon, too soon
While an affable buffoon
Sang us his lullabies.

Sing in dumb unison—scared
Or ignorant of the joint
Divergence of counterpoint
In which true tunes are scored?

Not even that—our air
Amplifies voicelessness;
The silence of unsuccess
Sighs for all that we are

Still to contrive to succeed
In failing at; we play
At work and labor all day
At play, sad to be said.

That idiot, Paradox, laughed,
For the steps we had to take
To save ourselves would break
The best that we had left—

Those principles we still
Assure ourselves that we
Keep though imperfectly—
The air of assent grows stale.

And harsh the voice of each claim.
Hope and distrust of hope
Are braided together in rope
—To hang ourselves with, or climb

Out of acedia's pit?
There is no sign for us
In the ambiguous
Text of this bubbling pot

In which we seethe as a tame
Curl of smoke ascends
From the burning of candle-ends
That is the fire this time,

The fire that brings to a boil
A terror beyond all fears.
A broth of soured tears
Fills the horizon's bowl,

Loud in such darkness, whether
Soon to be burnt or drowned,
Our dimmed noise and unsound
Light will come together.

JOHN HOLLANDER

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There stood my grief. It smiled on me.
My lips were shaped on: *"You shall be forgotten."*
My front knees dropped. He whispered in my ear:
"Am I not pure? Say no."

Biting my nape, he drove my flesh away.

No! No! This flesh is me!

Henze's extraordinary score makes this scene and the subsequent finale almost unbearably intense. If anything keeps the opera from being produced more often, it may have something to do with the peculiarities of the libretto. Into the middle of things, the librettists dropped an intermezzo, "The Judgment of Calliope," full of undergraduate silliness. And for a poet who elsewhere complained about contemporary opera production ("Director Y who with ingenious wit / Places his wretched singers in the pit / While dancers mime their roles, *Z the Designer / Who sets the whole thing on an ocean liner, / The girls in shorts, the men in yachting caps,*" and so on), this libretto is decked out to distraction. Tiresias is to be dressed as an Anglican archdeacon, Dionysus as a regency dandy, the maenads are all made up to look like Brigitte Bardot. The final tableau, when the flames sink, shows Semele's tomb. But on it are two enormous south seas fertility idols. A child appears with a mechanical doll that repeats "Mamma, mamma," until she smashes it on the tomb and jumps up and down with joy. And so on. It makes one long for the concert version.

Edward Mendelson's editing of this remarkable volume is, again, exemplary. His notes combine the fastidiousness and the refinement that characterize the best sort of scholarship—information that quickens rather than dulls our thinking about the matters at hand. Mendelson has provided, and then kept thoughtfully out of the way, every variant reading, all the information and subsidiary texts that one could require. A step back from his notes will sometimes reveal the lengths to which it was necessary for Mendelson to go in order to get what his edition needed. Transcribed from impossible-to-find films or pirated recordings, retrieved from the dustiest of microfiched archives, it has all been brought back, and by bringing it back Mendelson allows us to appreciate anew the tumbled life of any collaborator, and the methods that Auden summoned to get things just right.

J.D. McClatchy is editor of *The Yale Review*. In addition to his poetry and criticism, he has written opera libretti for four composers.

You deserve a factual look at...

Israel's Peace with the PLO

Can the leopard change his spots...the wolf become a lamb?

The world was electrified by "the handshake" and the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO. The Israelis promised the PLO control initially over the Gaza strip and the city of Jericho. But after the first euphoria has passed, where is this development going to lead?

What are the facts?

The PLO and Yassir Arafat. Israel is making this fateful arrangement with a terror organization. According to its "covenant", which has never been rescinded, the PLO has only one aim: the destruction of the state of Israel through force and violence. The aim is and has always been the notorious "phased plan": to eliminate Israel in two stages—first by creating a Palestinian state in any territory vacated by Israel and then using that state to foment an allied Arab assault against the truncated and critically vulnerable Jewish state.

Until recently, Arafat was officially declared a terrorist by the United States government and was not allowed entry into our country. He is personally responsible for hundreds of assassinations and terrorist attacks. The fact that such a man could appear on the White House lawn, that he could shake hands with the President of the United States, and with the Prime Minister of Israel is truly astonishing.

"If it yielded the "West Bank", Israel would be only 9 miles wide at its narrow waist—it would take no major military effort to slice it in half and to destroy it. No country should expose itself to such peril".

A mortal danger to Israel. Turning over control of the Gaza strip and any part of the "West Bank" to the Arabs puts Israel in mortal peril. The basic conflict is not between Israel and the "Palestinians", with whom some accommodation, some arrangement of autonomy, could certainly be reached. The basic conflict is with the Arab nations, all of which, with the sole exception of Egypt, are still in a state of war with Israel. They are armed to the teeth, not just with "conventional" weapons, but with missiles that even today can reach any part of Israel, and with weapons of mass destruction—chemical, biological and nuclear.

With the "West Bank" in Arab hands, missiles won't be needed. Mortars and shoulder-held Stingers would suffice to threaten every commercial flight into and out of Israel, to impede the take-off of military airplanes and to threaten and rain destruction on the principal cities of Israel and its most important industrial, commercial and military installations. Sure, the world would insist that the new Palestinian state be demilitarized. But does anybody really believe that with Israel surrounded by mortal enemies, they would allow such a military vacuum to exist for any length of time—even in the unlikely case that the Palestinians would so desire? If it yielded the "West Bank", Israel would be only 9 miles wide at its narrow waist—it would take no major military effort to slice it in half and to destroy it. No country should expose itself to such peril. But with the Judean hills in enemy hands, and without the elaborate warning system on those hills, Israel is totally indefensible and at the mercy of its enemies. That is the opinion of 100 U.S. generals and admirals who so reported to the President and to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

We all want peace and, surely, besieged Israel, which has been under constant attack since the day of its creation, wants peace more than anybody. And it is likely that such fervent wish for peace has led Israel into making fateful concessions to Yassir Arafat and the PLO. It will be almost impossible to reverse what has been done. The process of empowering the Palestinians will almost certainly result in a Palestinian state. Will it, as we are told, be "democratic" and peaceful? Not likely! Every one of the 22 Arab states is totalitarian, ruled autocratically, and ruthlessly abusive of human rights. Another Lebanon, carved on Israel's back, with never-ending strife and bloodshed is much more likely—a source of constant terrorist attacks against Israel and ultimately the source of a new Mid-East war. In such a war, Israel's ability to defend itself and to prevail would be in serious question.

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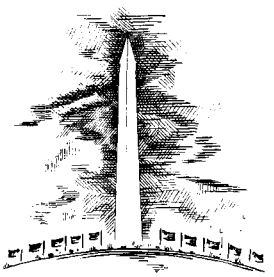
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Vole models

THERE HAVE BEEN STORIES, IN newspapers and on T.V., about once peaceful communities of Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, mostly in America's Rust belt, that have been split apart by the violence an ocean away. I felt the long reach of the Balkan conflict about six months ago, when I hired a group of former Yugoslavs to move me from New York to Washington. Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, remarkably, they had long enjoyed a reputation for skill and teamwork. And when I met with their leader, a Serb, it seemed everything would be fine: five or six guys—filmmakers, poets, sculptors in real life—would come over to pack and cart away my belongings. On the morning of the move, I was out in front of the apartment just before 5:00, in the rain. No movers. I went back inside. At 6:30, only three people pulled up in what turned out to be a too-small U-Haul. They looked gloomy and distracted. There had been a fight; the Bosnians would not be coming along. It went downhill from there. A white couch was dropped in the middle of Hudson Street; traffic flowed around it. A wooden table leapt down a flight of stairs; chips flew. The movers set out for Washington midafternoon, got lost and arrived just before midnight. By that time, there were only two of them, both Serbs. The lone Croat had bailed. War had broken out in lower Manhattan: the former Yugoslavs had agreed to partition.

ON THE TRAIN TRIP BACK TO NEW York to pick up the stuff that couldn't fit in the U-Haul, I rode the X-2000, the Swedish "tilt" train that Amtrak was testing on the Metroliner tracks. Though I know nothing about its technological merits—an Amtrak press kit tells me special self-steering axles enable it to take curves 30 percent to 40 percent faster than regular, fixed-axle trains—I can say that the X-2000's interiors are spectacular. Fine blond wood, white walls, thickly padded, roomy seats. Stewards. Lingonberries. I had such a good time that last month I made a point of riding the German ICE (InterCityExpress) train, which is now running on the same route. (Amtrak is in the process of commissioning high-speed trains; the X-2000 and the ICE are candidates.) Sadly, when I boarded at Union Station—along with a crowd of train buffs, many of whom had video cameras and notepads to chronicle the journey—I met with disappointment. The cars were done up in peach and pink, a confection of tinted mirrors and frosted glass. Strange, wave-shaped moldings hung from the walls. I got the feeling that if Helmut Kohl was an interior designer, this is what he'd design. What stood out most, though, were the doors. On the Swedish X-2000, the doors between cars open when you press a red, nickel-sized button on the wall. On a jostling train humming along at 120 miles an hour, the procedure demands concentration, precision, zenlike care. The doors on the American-made Amtrak cars are a little easier: they open with a kick or a slap to one of two large, plastic wall panels. Effective, but the act of pummeling these well-worn patches seems very *northeast-corridor*. No such exertions are necessary on the German ICE train, however: the doors open automatically, whether you want them to or not.



MY FAVORITE NEW ENTRY IN THE gender wars is the prairie vole. *The New York Times* has been updating readers on the midwestern rodent for at least three years. When we become dejected about humans, it seems, we find animal role models. And one could do worse than to choose the noble vole, whose virtues were enumerated by the *Times*'s Natalie Angier earlier this month. ("Feather-footed through the plashy fen passes the questing vole," wrote Evelyn Waugh's William Boot in celebration of the creature.) In her article, which was based on a study that appeared in the journal *Nature*, Angier points out that voles "are famed for their monogamous and egalitarian ways, with males and females teaming up for life and contributing jointly to pup-rearing duties." These admirable qualities are probably the result of two hormones, oxytocin and vasopressin. Oxytocin triggers maternal behavior in females; vasopressin stimulates monogamous and paternal behavior in males. In the male vole, vasopressin is released during intercourse. "Immediately after a male has mated with a female," the story reports, "he shows distinct signs of preferring her to other females, cuddling with her and attacking strange voles of either sex that approach his turf." The scientists demonstrated their point by injecting the fuzzy brown creatures with hormone blockers. Male voles given the treatment were eager to engage in sex, but were cold and distant toward their partners afterward. They said they'd call and they didn't. What a pleasant relief to discover, after years of guilt-tripping from the religious right, that family values are an opiate. And what a great way to reinvent government. No welfare reform; no orphanages; no garish programs; no more deadbeat dads and fatherless children. Just a refillable prescription, made available to every post-pubescent male citizen, for a new topical solution—call it eau de vole.

MUCH HAS BEEN MADE RECENTLY over the loss of civility (Howard, Rush, Beavis, etc.). How else to explain the success of the funereal *The Age of Innocence*? The movie gives people a chance to visit a time when manners counted and violence was done mostly with words. It was a happy surprise, then, to discover in Washington, beneath the rude clatter of elected officials, unelected officials, pundits and apparatchiks, all banging away for attention, a few lingering rituals of social order. Take, for example, the case of Mr. Jack Kent Cooke, the 80-year-old owner of the Redskins. On September 15, at 1 a.m., Mr. Cooke's fourth wife, the Bolivian-born Marlene Leonara Ramallo Miguens Chalmers Cooke, was arrested for driving down M Street N.W. with a man who was not her husband clinging to the hood of her Jaguar. After first refusing to take a breath test—and then throwing a gold pump at a D.C. cop—Mrs. Cooke, dressed in a Chanel bustier and a matching miniskirt, proceeded to explain that her passenger was her nephew and that they were on their way home from a baby shower. Now, imagine the embarrassment to Mr. Cooke. Add to it the news, released soon after the incident, that the fellow riding shotgun was not a relative but a 27-year-old Dutch citizen by the name of Patrick Wermer. Throw into the stew an addled Redskins team having a lousy season and we're talking the potential for excruciating public humiliation. So, with much of Washington tittering, what did Mr. Cooke do? Did he run? Did he hide? Did he denounce his wife? No. He took her to lunch. Twice in the same week. Publicly. And to Duke's and The Palm. Valiantly shielding his besieged wife from the hail of reporters' questions and the hiss of photographers' shutters, Mr. Cooke betrayed not a hint of shame. Edith Wharton might have deemed it a performance worthy of Newland Archer; *The New York Times* might say it was worthy of a vole.

DAVID SHIPLEY

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9.

Americans ***will*** be able to switch plans.

8.

Americans ***will*** be able to seek providers outside their plans.

7.

Americans ***will*** be able choose from a menu of plans.

6.

Americans ***will*** be able to have a "primary care physician" who will advise them about the selection of other providers within their plan.

5.

Americans will have ***real information*** — a report card — about "patient satisfaction" concerning providers within their plan.

4.

Americans will have ***real information*** — a report card — about costs when they choose a plan.

3.

Americans will have ***real information*** — a report card — about the success of medical treatments when they choose a plan.

2.

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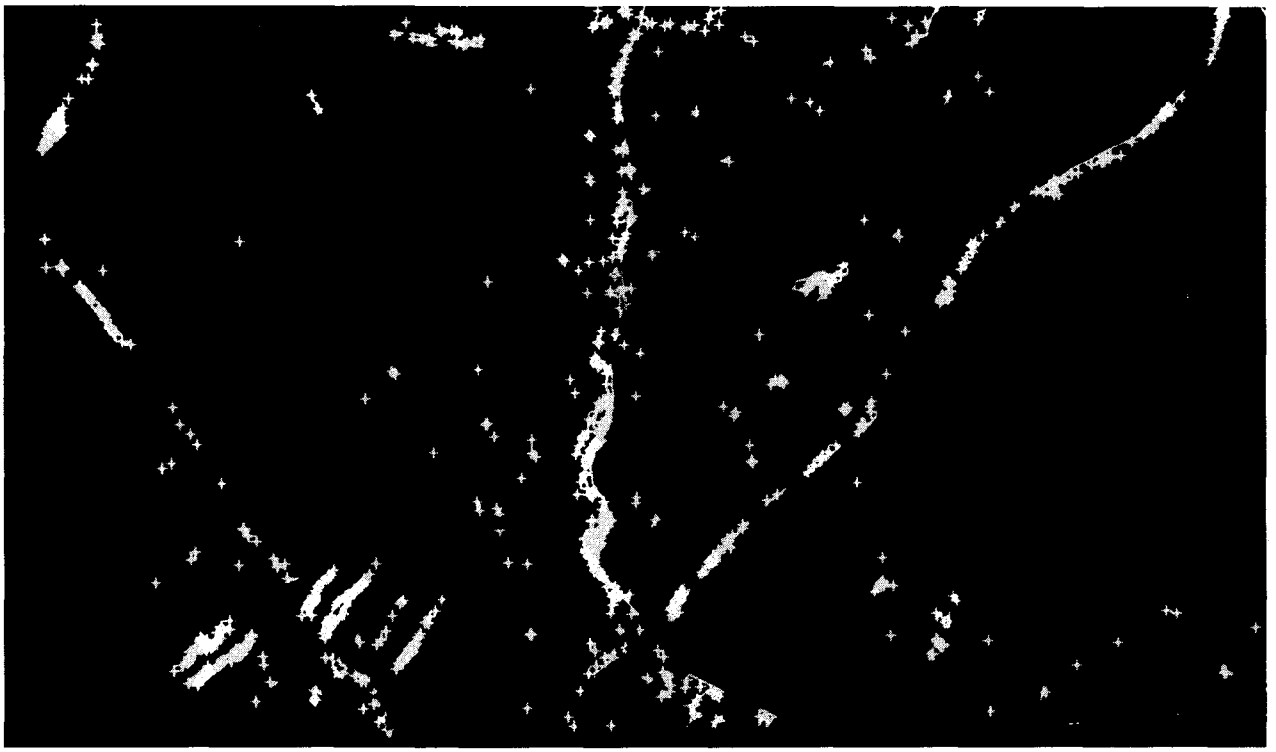

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